

New flight paths are set to remake SoCal's airspace noise map

Sharon McNary, SCPR | Sep 6, 2016

A plan to redesign the flight paths planes use to land and take off at Los Angeles International and 20 other local airports from Santa Barbara to San Diego and inland to Palm Springs has cleared its last regulatory hurdle.



LAX's control tower. Ben Bergman/KPCC

The [Southern California Metroplex project](#) would switch aircraft away from the use of ground-based navigation systems which let planes use fairly broad approaches to airports, as if they were on a wide road with many lanes. The new system uses satellite navigation, which puts aircraft on much narrower, precise approach and departure paths.

"With satellite navigation it's so precise that it narrows the track down to a one-lane highway," said Federal Aviation

Administration spokesman Ian

Gregor. The FAA recently [issued a finding that no significant additional noise or other impacts would affect residents](#).

However, residents in some areas who don't experience a lot of aircraft noise might now see and hear planes — and because of the precise satellite guidance, any areas that get new flights overhead will get a lot of them. It's unclear from FAA documents which areas will get more or less noise.

The approval process was delayed in Southern California as some cities like [Santa Monica said the FAA's documentation was too confusing to their own experts and to the public](#). The FAA has no single map that shows how the new flight paths differ from the old ones. There are [dozens of maps](#), each showing how a new flight path will differ from the one it's replacing.

Los Angeles, Culver City and several members of Congress sought delays to allow more public review.

Long Beach Airport's noise officer Ron Reeves examined the plan and said any changes in aircraft approaches would be happening far outside that city, so it would not change how much noise residents experience.

The plan does not significantly change approaches or departure paths for Burbank Airport, said spokeswoman Lucy Burghdorf.

Officials at Orange County's John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana were not yet clear on how the changed flight paths might affect residents in surrounding areas. That airport had a decades-long dispute with residents over noise, and a court settlement that was updated last year now governs issues over which the airport has control, like hours of operation, caps on the number of passengers and noise levels.

"We believe this program will provide significant benefits to airspace flow in Southern California as it is implemented over time," said Kelly J. Frederick, CEO of Ontario International Airport, in an emailed statement.

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