



AVIATION ACTIVITIES UPDATE

August 23, 2021

At the request of Aviation Committee members, each month, the Aviation Activities Update will include at least one topic frequently raised, or question commonly asked, by residents regarding John Wayne Airport or its operations. This month's newsletter focuses on who or what owns the airport, controls the nation's airspace and handles flight scheduling. It also addresses some common questions related to general aviation operations.

About Airport Ownership, Airspace Control, Flight Scheduling

John Wayne Airport (JWA) is owned and operated by the County of Orange (County), which is governed by the Orange County Board of Supervisors (Board). The County oversees what air carriers serve JWA, what concessions are offered in the terminals, what Fixed Base Operators hold leases in the general aviation area of the airport, and much more. The airport's fulltime staff manages its day-to-day operations, but significant decisions are made and voted on by the Board in publicly noticed meetings. Newport Beach City Council Members and citizens often attend Board meetings to advocate for our community's interests and protections when the Board considers airport-related items. Generally speaking, the County controls (with some notable exceptions), what occurs on the ground, at the airport itself.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controls the national airspace system and regulates aviation safety. As soon as an aircraft's wheels lift off JWA's runway, the FAA is in charge of approving how and where the aircraft is flown - including flight procedures and routing. Any changes to departure or arrival paths are studied and determined by the FAA, with historically little input considered from communities surrounding the airports. This has caused a great deal of frustration among residents who live near airports, particularly with the way in which NextGen and the Southern California Metroplex were implemented. Congress (and communities like Newport Beach) is working to change that practice.

It should also be noted that the FAA is responsible for airport safety and provides federal grants through its Airport Improvement Program (AIP). If an airport sponsor, such as the County, accepts a grant for airport development, airport planning, or a noise compatibility program grant, it must comply with certain [grant assurances](#). Last month's Aviation Activities Update included an article explaining that, due to federal [grant assurances](#), JWA is unable to financially incentivize air carriers to bring quieter equipment into Orange County.

Aircraft operators (including commercial air carriers, air cargo operators and general aviation) represent the third group with a role in JWA's flight operations. Working within the limits set forth in the 1985 Settlement Agreement, as amended, such as the limits on annual passengers, noise levels and curfew hours, as well as the General Aviation Noise Ordinance, operators determine what aircraft they will use and when their flights are scheduled. In addition to the binding legal agreements, the City has asked the County to implement a voluntary, Fly Quiet/Fly Friendly program for general aviation to further protect our community from JWA's noise impacts. Further, the City and the Airport Working Group (AWG) are working directly with the air carriers on ways they can voluntarily reduce noise and emissions stemming from JWA operations.

While the City of Newport Beach has no day-to-day operational control over what happens at JWA, it is a signatory to the 1985 Settlement Agreement, along with our community partners AWG and Still Protecting our Newport (SPON), and the County. While the parties may sometimes disagree, the City, SPON and AWG have a good history of working with the County. This is important because the City, AWG and SPON must partner with the County to preserve the protections contained in the 1985 Settlement Agreement, including the nighttime curfew on most arrivals and departures, and the noise limits.

About General Aviation Operations – Can Small Planes Fly at Night?

The City and Aviation Committee members continue to field questions related to general aviation (GA) operations, including those about nighttime GA departures. The 1985 Settlement Agreement and the subsequent amendments agreed to by the County, City, AWG and SPON, include a time-based curfew on departures and arrivals that exclusively pertains to commercial air carrier operations.

However, more than 30 years ago, the County adopted the General Aviation Noise Ordinance (GANO) which placed a noise-level based curfew on general aviation flights. The GANO remains in effect today and Section 2-1-30.5(b) reads as follows:

“No person shall operate any general aviation aircraft at night at John Wayne Airport if it generates a SENEL level at any of the following respective noise monitoring stations, either on takeoff or landing, which is greater than the following SENEL values:

NMS 1S	87.5 dB
NMS 2S	87.6 dB
NMS 3S	86.7 dB
NMS 4S	86.7 dB
NMS 5S	86.7 dB
NMS 6S	86.7 dB
NMS 7S	86.7 dB
NMS 8N	86.9 dB
NMS 9N	86.9 dB
NMS 10N	86.9 dB

Nighttime general aviation operations are defined as departures being between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. (8 a.m. on Sundays) as measured at any JWA noise monitoring station and arrivals between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. (8 a.m. on Sundays) as measured at any JWA noise monitoring station.

Small planes, including private jets as they are considered GA, can fly in and out of JWA at night as long as they can do so within the prescribed noise limits. However, in late 2020, the City’s Aviation Committee forwarded a list of priority recommendations to JWA, urging the airport to implement a voluntary, GA Fly Quiet / Fly Friendly program as soon as possible. Among the items requested was a voluntary restraint on nighttime operations, separate from, and in addition to, the mandatory noise restrictions contained in the GANO. Meaning, the airport would ask small plane pilots to voluntarily avoid arriving or departing between the hours prescribed in the commercial aircraft curfew.

The County and JWA are currently working on developing a Fly Quiet / Fly Friendly program and the City is anxiously awaiting a draft to see which of its recommendations will be incorporated into the new program.

Aviation Committee Membership and Activities

Aviation Committee Members

The Aviation committee is comprised of two City Council Members; a representative of each [Council District](#); a representative from each of the local aviation-focused community groups – AWG, Citizens Against Airport Noise and Pollution (CAANP) and SPON; a general aviation representative; a Newport Coast representative; and a member-at-large.

Council Member Diane Dixon, Chair	Hugh Logan – District 7
Council Member Noah Blom, Vice Chair	Stephen Livingston – General Aviation
Alan Guenther – District 1	Roger Ham – Newport Coast
Sharon Ray – District 2	Jack Stranberg – Member at Large
Bonnie O’Neil – District 3	Tony Khoury – AWG
Vacant - District 4	Julie Johnson – CAANP
Cameron Verdi – District 5	Nancy Alston – SPON
Jeffrey Cole - District 6	

Each committee member is assigned to an Ad Hoc committee or works with City staff and officials on advancing one or more of the annual priorities. You can view the list of Committee Member assignments [here](#).

2021 Committee Priorities & Assignments

The City’s Aviation Committee continues to make progress on its agenda of addressing 16 priorities in 2021. The priorities are divided into four focus areas:

1. Airport Operations and Relations
2. Community Outreach / Communication
3. Government Relations
4. Quieter Departures

At each Aviation Committee meeting, members provide reports on any action made toward achieving their respective priorities. The reports are summarized on a tracking sheet. You can view the tracking sheet [here](#).

Next Aviation Committee Meeting

The Aviation Committee will be held on Monday, September 20, 2021, at 5 p.m.

John Wayne Airport Posts June 2021 Statistics

The total number of passengers traveling through John Wayne Airport and the number of general aviation operations in June 2021 increased as compared to June 2020, but commercial operations remained below pre-pandemic levels, according to recently posted JWA passenger count and operations data for [June 2021](#). The table below includes the monthly statistics for June 2019, June 2020 and June 2021.

	June 2021	June 2020	June 2019
Total Passengers (emplaned and deplaned)	730,144	181,486	918,913
Commercial Operations	6,424	2,534	7,512
Commuter Operations	500	285	454
General Aviation Operations	22,207	16,357	17,496
Military Operations	22	55	69
Total Aircraft Operations	29,153	19,231	25,531

In June 2021, the top three airlines serving JWA, based on passenger count, were Southwest Airlines (311,304), American Airlines (138,074) and Alaska Airlines (96,695).