



50 F St. NW, Suite 750  
Washington, D.C. 20001

T. 202-737-7950  
F. 202-273-7951

[www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org)

November 30, 2018

Santa Clara Board of Supervisors  
70 West Hedding St  
San Jose, CA 95110

Reference: Dec 4, 2018 Board meeting, Agenda item 19  
Airport Business Plan

Dear Supervisors;

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a membership organization comprised of nearly 330,000 aircraft owners, pilots, and people who appreciate the value of general aviation in their communities. On behalf of more than 34,000 members in California, I am writing to urge the Board to approve option 1 of the staff report submitted by Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive as described on page 17 of document 93897 A. This option, among other items, will set the County policy to once again accept Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds for airport maintenance and development at Reid Hillview Airport (RHV).

In reviewing all the documents relating to the development of the business plan updates for both Reid Hillview and South County's San Martin (E16) airports, we are troubled that the topic of closure of Reid Hillview Airport has again surfaced. Numerous small businesses and professionals use aircraft based at RHV to support their business needs. The proposal to close RHV and transfer operations to San Martin, an hour or more commute from San Jose, simply is not a viable or efficient option. With limited capacity for basing aircraft at both Palo Alto and SJC, there are no viable alternatives to RHV in the immediate area. AOPA is strongly opposed to any move by Santa Clara County to close RHV.

Reid Hillview Airport is a critical FAA designated reliever airport to San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC). With its close proximity to Silicone Valley and downtown San Jose, RHV provides an attractive alternate for general aviation operations. Rather than arriving or departing from SJC, those aircraft operations take place at RHV. The loss of RHV would move a significant number of the 160,000 operations to SJC likely causing additional congestion and delays in airline operations at SJC.

Attempting to close Reid Hillview Airport in the face of existing Federal Grant Obligations "in perpetuity" linked to FAA Grant funds used to acquire the majority of land for the airport could result in expensive and uncertain litigation for years. Grant obligations linked to capital improvements accepted previously won't expire until 2031. Under current policy, the county is passing up millions of FAA AIP grants that could be used to upgrade and maintain the facilities at Reid Hillview, including repayment of the \$3 million loan issued in 2017 by the county to repave the runways at both Reid Hillview and San Martin Airports.

San Jose State University's Aviation Department, forced to relocate from SJC to RHV, is the only university in the State university system that offers a complete aviation curriculum including flight, technician and operations training. The university depends on its location at RHV to provide training opportunities for students. Students, including local community members, benefit from this training which provides access to high-paying careers in the aviation industry. If RHV were to close, with no viable alternatives in the valley in which to relocate this university program, so too would this important educational component.

Suggestions to close RHV seem to have germinated in response to a need for "affordable housing" in the Santa Clara Valley. Unfortunately, closing RHV will have no impact on affordable housing needs in 2018 since with current FAA Grant Assurances, we believe the earliest available date for closure would be after 2030. If the county were serious about addressing the affordable housing crisis, the county could begin immediate development with bond funds on land currently owned by the county. Progress could be made now, not 12 years from now when the affordable housing crisis will be much worse.

We urge the county Board of Supervisors to set a policy to accept federal AIP and other FAA grants for Reid Hillview Airport and to remove any process to study closing the airport. RHV is a viable and important community asset,

We appreciate your consideration of our comments on this most important issue.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn  
AOPA Government Affairs  
e-mail: [Bill.Dunn@aopa.org](mailto:Bill.Dunn@aopa.org)  
phone: 301-695-2044

Cc: Supervisor Mike Wasserman  
Supervisor Cindy Chavez  
Supervisor Dave Cortese  
Supervisor Ken Yeager  
Supervisor Joe Simitian