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May 1, 2012

Honorable Richard Bloom
Mayor
City of Santa Monica
1685 Main Street
Room 209
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Dear Mayor Bloom:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of over 400,000 members, including nearly 46,000 in the State of California. AOPA is committed to ensuring the future safety, viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a local, state and national transportation system without undue restriction.

We are writing to share information with you and council that we believe may be of interest as the city continues forward with the visioning process for Santa Monica Airport (SMO). Additionally, we look forward to attending and participating in the May 8th Council meeting where the next phase will be discussed.

For the past 30 years, SMO has often been the subject of public discussion, in which a negative impression of the public sentiment towards the airport was driven by a handful of vocal individuals. During that time, AOPA has been actively engaged with the aviation community in a number of issues surrounding the airport. However, over the past several years, the intensity of the debate has elevated significantly, which led the city to attempt to restrict operations at the airport, resulting in unsuccessful litigation in the federal judiciary.

Despite the debate over the airport's future we have found no indication that any group, organization or individual has ever undertaken any effort to find out, in a very qualitative and quantitative manner, what voters in the city – constituents of the city's elected officials – actually thought of the issues surrounding the airport. While some anti-airport groups claim to have conducted such a survey, it does not appear to have been conducted in a manner that provides statistically valid results.

To that end, the Association retained the services of APCO Insight, a respected and knowledgeable international public policy consultancy organization to take the pulse of voters in the City of Santa Monica. Our direction to APCO was simple – tell us what voters feel about the airport and other key issues in the city in as fair and straightforward a manner as possible.

The survey was conducted in August last year with a 40 minute telephone interview with residents in the city. Since City officials run at-large, the city divided into 3 zones based on zip code with Zone 1 being the north end of the city and Zone 3 being the southernmost portion of the city and including the airport. The attached graphic shows these zones. The survey included 400 adult "high-propensity voters" in the city providing a +/-4.5% error variable. Respondent eligibility was determined by voting behavior (all or most elections) and high media consumption. Data collection methodology used was the

Random Digit Dialing CATI. Over half of the respondents have lived in the city for 25 or more years (53%) and 22% have lived in the city for 15-24 years. Respondents included Males at 47% and females at 53%. The age of respondent varied from 25-75+ with 40% in the 40-59 range and 36% in the 60-74 range. A broad range of questions were used in the survey with the results providing AOPA with a very clear picture of what is on the mind of and of concern to your constituents.

The beginning question posed to respondents was:

“Generally speaking, do you think things in Santa Monica are moving in the right or the wrong direction?”

I am sure you will be pleased to know that in contrast to a generally negative national and state view of government, by a positive majority, 53% of surveyed voters are generally satisfied with the direction of the city and government.

The second question posed to respondents was:

“And what’s the most important issue facing the city today – that is, the issue you yourself are the most concerned about?”

Quite interestingly, the airport is near the bottom of the list of concerns; placing 16 out of 18 with 2%. Traffic congestion, Growth and development, Education and schools as well as the Homeless, in that order, were at the top of the list of concerns. Obviously, the airport is not a key issue for voters in the city.

Next, respondents were asked to identify issues they believed should be the focus of city government.

“Now let’s think about Santa Monica city government. What’s the most important issue that city government should be focusing on right now – that is; the top priority for government?”

Reflecting the priorities they had already stated, respondents identified 17 areas of concern with Traffic/Parking, Growth and development, Education and schools, and Government spending, in that order, being at the top of the list. The airport was 16 of 17 issues with 1%.

It is noteworthy that, although it ranks low amongst their concerns, respondents have a very strong awareness of the Santa Monica Airport and the issues (62%) with 54% indicating that the SMO benefits to the community and the positives outweigh any negatives.

When asked about whether or not SMO should remain open, there is high intensity support for keeping the airport open with two-thirds of voters believing the airport should stay open. Even in Zone 3, which includes the airport, 59% believe the airport should remain open.

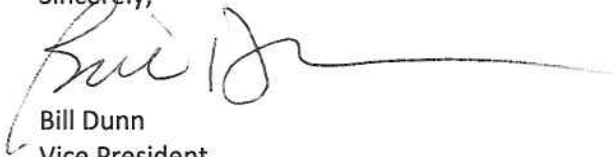
The results and analysis of respondent replies to the APCO Insight survey clearly indicate that SMO airport, while a concern to a few vocal opponents, is not a key issue that voters see as important to them or the city as a whole.

While some in the community may have legitimate concerns regarding operations at the airport, the rhetoric regarding closure of the airport as an only option has created an environment over many years in which it has been nearly impossible to have meaningful dialogue amongst all the stakeholders as to an exploration of options that might mitigate some areas of local concern.

On behalf of the aviation community, AOPA has been pursuing an open dialogue with the City. We were pleased to see the constructive turn taken by the Santa Monica Airport Community Process, in which a great deal of positive and productive discussion occurred at the many discussion groups. We look forward to continuing those discussions and working with the city to ensure the future of SMO is one that continues to see the city benefit from a thriving general aviation airport, while addressing the concerns of the airport neighbors. According to our research, that seems to be the same agenda as voters within the city.

I am looking forward to attending the May 8th meeting and would be pleased to answer any question you or members of the council may have regarding this research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Dunn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airport Advocacy

Cc: Ms. Gleam Davis, Mayor Pro Tempore
Councilmember Robert Holbrook
Councilmember Kevin McKeown
Councilmember Pam O'Connor
Councilmember Terry O'Day
Councilmember Bobby Shriver
Mr. Rod Gould, City Manager