

PROPOSED CLASS C AIRSPACE DESIGNATION SURROUNDING LONG BEACH AIRPORT – POTENTIAL IMPACT ON RANCHO PALOS VERDES

Posted July 28, 2010

As you may already know, The FAA conducted public meetings in Long Beach on June 22 and 23, 2010 to present a proposed change of the airspace surrounding the Long Beach Airport (LGB) to a Class C designation and receive public comments. Staff first became aware of the public meetings regarding the proposed airspace change via an email received from a concerned resident on July 21st. The deadline for submitting public comments to the FAA is July 31, 2010. At the request of City Staff, the FAA has agreed to extend the public comment deadline to September 21, 2010.

Based upon preliminary inquiries with the FAA, the public meetings serve to gather facts and public comments pursuant to the regulatory process that could possibly lead to an airspace change surrounding LGB. The FAA will consider the comments prior to making a decision whether to move forward with the proposed LGB airspace change. If the FAA decides to move forward, the process will include the issuance of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, followed by a public comment process prior to a final decision to issue a rule to change the LGB airspace. The process could take up to a couple years before any rulemaking is finalized.

Staff will agendize the matter for the Regular Council meeting on September 7, 2010 with the expectation to present a draft comment letter to the FAA that could be approved by the City Council and signed by the Mayor. We would attach the written comments received by the public through the date of the City's comment letter at that time.

Staff cannot quickly ascertain what, if any, the impact may be on the City, its residents and our leisure and tourism community. We have received emails and phone calls expressing serious concerns. This is a complex, technical airspace matter that requires additional time to gather information to enable any meaningful recommendation to the City Council. Notwithstanding the short amount of time we have known about this proposed change, the FAA's willingness to accept the City's comments after the published deadline is noteworthy and appreciated by Staff.

Briefly, the issue is as follows: The airspace surrounding LGB is currently classified Class D. Generally, a Class D airspace designation requires aircraft, including (non-commercial) general aviation aircraft, to communicate with the airport control tower prior to entering its designated Class D airspace. Generally, a Class C designation requires all aircraft to have a Mode C transponder to send radio signals to Air Traffic Control ("ATC") facilities to enable flight tracking, as well as obtaining approval from ATC prior to entering Class C airspace. Based

upon early discussions, its Staff's understanding that most general aviation aircraft throughout southern California airspace is already equipped with transponders. The ATC role will be served by Southern California TRACON, also known as "SCT" in the proposed LGB Class C airspace. Any aircraft wishing to depart or return to an airport located within a Class C airspace must contact ATC for authorization prior to entering Class C airspace. However, air traffic management is a complex process that includes the use of tracking and communication technology and communications with airport control tower personnel and pilots as aircraft pass through multiple air spaces while in flight.

Although Staff does not possess the technical air safety expertise to evaluate the possible impact, we have conducted conversations with the Staff of the FAA, SCT, Torrance Airport, the Chairman of the Aviation Technical Advisory Committee of the Southern California Association of Governments and several of the concerned residents that have communicated with Staff and Council Members. Some of the conversations are ongoing at the time of this update. Therefore, Staff's findings will be reported later.

The Los Angeles basin is considered one of the most complex air spaces in the country regarding the management of air traffic. The **commercial aircraft industry segment** (i.e. passenger airlines and freight carriers) might be expected to support the airspace change citing improved air safety, especially passenger safety. The **general aviation aircraft community** (i.e. flight schools, flying clubs and small businesses) might be expected to oppose the proposed airspace change citing the reasons to not enter Class C airspace and its unfavorable impact on flight schools, limiting general aviation use and safety. The possible impact on the quality of life of the City's residents and tourism community may result from the possible increase of aircraft noise and the risks resulting from aircraft compression – more general aviation aircraft flying in a defined area are important considerations for the City. Of course, maintaining air flight safety in Southern California is of the utmost importance.

It has been reported that the proposed LGB airspace change may "push" a greater number of instructional, testing and practice aircraft flights from the designated Long Beach/Los Angeles Harbor Flight training Area to the Palos Verdes Flight Training and Practice Area along the City's coastline. The concern seems to be based upon the expectation that instructional flights may elect to avoid the necessity to obtain ATC authorization to fly through the Class C airspace and choose to fly in the Palos Verdes Palos Verdes Flight Training and Practice Area along the Palos Verdes coastline.

The following is a link to information that is available on the website for the Southern California Airspace Users Working Group regarding the proposed LGB airspace change:

<http://www.scauwg.org/scauwg/LongBeachClassCAirspaceProposal.html>.

Anyone outside of the City that is interested in providing the FAA with comments may wish to do so on or before September 21, 2010 (in triplicate) to:

Clark Desing, Operations support Group, AJV-W2
Western Service Area, Air traffic Organization
Federal Aviation Administration
1601 Lind Avenue, SW
Renton, WA 98057

Staff will provide significant updates the Breaking News and Aircraft Noise listserver groups and the City's website. Feel free to direct any questions and/or comments that you or others have to Dennis McLean, Director of Finance & Information Technology, at 310-544-5212 or dennism@rpv.com.