

# PALO ALTO AIRPORT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## ***PALO ALTO AIRPORT***

**DECEMBER 2015**



A Member Organization of the California Pilots Association

### **SAVE THE DATE: PAAA GENERAL MEETING PLANNED FOR WEDNESDAY, JAN 20**

The PAAA Annual Meeting will be held at the golf course Bay Café. Arrive at 6:30 for no host bar and social time. Dinner is at 7:00 PM consisting of spaghetti with meatballs, Caesar salad and dessert. Cost is \$20 payable at the door, partners and guests are welcome. RSVP to [ralphbritton@comcast.net](mailto:ralphbritton@comcast.net), as **we really need to know how many to plan for!** There will be a short business meeting to elect officers. The presentation will be by PAAA and Palo Alto Historical Assn. president Ralph Britton: "History of Palo Alto Airports 1924 to present". Movie stars, famous pilots, political intrigue all figure into the airport's past and there were airports very near here that you've probably never heard about; don't miss it.



Paul Mantz, standing by a Fleet biplane at the Palo Alto Airport when it was located on Stanford land near the stadium. He ran the flight school before he became a noted Hollywood stunt flier.

### **CITY COUNCIL APPROVES DESIGN CONTRACTS FOR AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS**

The City Council has approved action by the Airport to let contracts to do design engineering for taxiway

rehabilitation and airport fencing. The taxiway design will take account of the ground water problem that exists throughout much of the airport area. The fencing project has become an urgent item with the FAA both for security and to address incursions on the runway by pedestrians.

Airport administration decided to proactively get the taxiway engineering started without waiting for a Federal grant so that the project would be ready for funding during the next grant cycle. The engineering costs will be eligible for reimbursement from the FAA. By starting now with the engineering, the actual rehabilitation work on the taxiways can start in 2017. Ninety percent of the cost of these projects will be covered by FAA grants with the airport enterprise fund responsible for the matching ten percent. The budget through 2021 amounts to \$14.75 M. This amounts to \$13.0 M allocated to apron reconstruction, i.e. taxiways etc. \$1.5 M for electrical improvements and 0.25M for airport layout planning studies.

The current design contracts are for an amount not to exceed \$900 k for the apron and \$179.8 k for fencing with FAA grants reimbursing a total of 90% or \$971.8 k.

Although the item was on the Council's consent calendar, there was concern an activist group opposing the airport would force a discussion of the item. Consequently a call went out to the airport community to attend. While the item went through smoothly, thanks are due to those who took their time to attend the meeting.

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## CITIZEN'S GROUP FORMED OVER AIRCRAFT NOISE CONCERNS IN PALO ALTO AREA

A group of residents, upset by noise resulting from the implementation of NEXGEN flight patterns, has formed *Sky Posse*. Flight paths for aircraft approaching SFO have changed and operating altitudes have, in some cases been lowered. New operations by Surf Air out of San Carlos have brought their Pilatus Aircraft on approach to San Carlos several times per day, directly over residential Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Atherton.

The group has pressed their concerns with the Palo Alto City Council, U.S. Congressional representative Anna Eshoo, County Supervisor Joe Simitian, and other elected officials. They have produced an extensive and interesting website:

<http://www.skypossepaloalto.org/>. It's worth a look. One interesting section shows flight tracks over Palo Alto and notes that in a given period there were 197 tracks over the area directed toward SFO and 11 noted for PAO. The group has focused on data collection and made their case with a well-researched presentation. While focused on SFO, PAO is not ignored. In a letter to the Palo Alto city council the Sky Posse wrote (full text on Sky Posse website):

"...Last, but of significant importance, ensure that all changes and growth planned for the Palo Alto Airport (PAO) are transparent to the community, give a voice in the decisions to the community, and employ best practices for noise abatement. PAO can benefit Palo Alto and neighboring cities, but sound planning and transparency are critical..."

Unfortunately and perhaps predictably, Sky Posse activities have triggered a reaction by the few residents who have for a long time had a visceral reaction against PAO. They regularly complain about noise and now have added lead in aviation gasoline to their complaints. Let's look at the noise issue.

The Airport Land Use Commission of Santa Clara County (ALUC) has published a plot of noise contours around PAO. These are used to determine what land uses are acceptable in the vicinity of the airport. These contours represent an average noise

level in accordance with a rather complex formula called "community noise equivalent level" (CNEL). A level of 65 dB is considered the maximum level acceptable for residential areas. At PAO, even the 55 dB level (a tenth the 65 dB volume) is well to the east of Highway 101. It's shown in yellow on the plot which can be found on page 3. The plot extrapolates to expected values for 2022, but little growth is, in fact, expected. So it's basically current.

A single noisy aircraft over one's house or school can be very annoying. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the PAO pilot community to follow flight paths and maintain power settings so as to minimize the impact to our neighbors. Noise minimization procedures are, briefly, for runway 31:

- 1) Departing, make a 10° right turn to avoid overflying E. Palo Alto residences.
- 2) Departing downwind make the crosswind leg at the auto bridge.
- 3) Use maximum rate of climb until nearing the residential area, then reduce power and/or rpm to lower your noise profile.
- 4) Departing to the south, consider using a right 270° pattern, crossing the runway mid-field well above pattern altitude.
- 5) When entering the left-hand pattern, maintain 1500' until over highway 101. This may result in your descending in the pattern; the tower anticipates this.
- 6) Save advancing the prop to high rpm until on final, at which time the governor is probably no longer controlling.

When climbing out over residential areas, reduce rpm to minimize noise; even a small decrease will limit the shock waves generated by the prop.

When responding to people complaining about the airport, ask them to be specific—date, time, location and type of aircraft. Pass this on to PAO staff. Mention the very low noise profile of the airport and point out the procedures pilots use to minimize noise. If the complaint is about lead in the fuel, note that the FAA, EPA and the AOPA all are working with oil companies and others to develop unleaded avgas to replace current fuel within the next few years.

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## AIRPORT DAY DRAWS AN ESTIMATED CROWD OF 3000

Once again Airport Day proved an excellent and effective way to connect with local citizens. The layout was improved to allow better circulation and access to all exhibits. The key features—Young Eagles, tower tours and the formation flyover were well appreciated. The Palo Alto Junior Museum exhibit had an eagle on display—appropriately flight oriented! The many exhibits showed a range of aviation-related and baylands themes which added to general interest. Kudos to Larry Shapiro, who stuck it out the entire time in spite of still recovering from serious injuries! To all who contributed to the effort—a hearty THANK YOU!

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Airport Association is nothing more or less than the time and effort put in by its members. We need all airport supporters to be members and volunteers to help out. You know the old saw; “many hands make for light lifting”. We are currently seeking members willing to serve on the Board and we desperately need someone to take on our website administration. Do you have the skills? Please help! The board meets once each month, currently at noon on the first Tuesday of each month. Changing the time to the evening is under consideration if that will make it easier for members to attend. Contact: [ralphbritton@comcast.net](mailto:ralphbritton@comcast.net) or (650) 328-0760 if you are able to give a little time to PAAA to make us more effective.

## IT'S A NEW YEAR and MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

Dues payment determines PAAA membership and we need you! The biggest budget item is Airport Day and your dues are essential to allowing us to do this crucial annual event. A large membership roster makes us a strong voice for the airport when it needs support. Dues are \$20.00 for a regular membership, but please consider a sustaining membership at \$30.00 or more. Send your dues to:

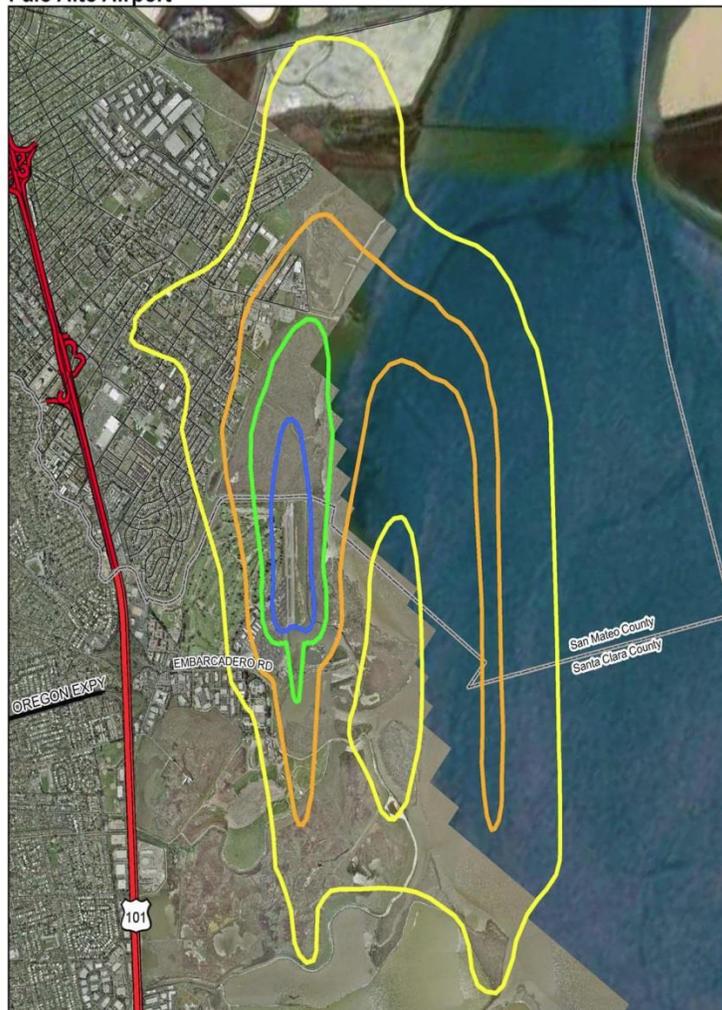
PAAA

P.O. Box 60275

Palo Alto CA 94306, or contribute online at

[www.paloaltoairport.aero](http://www.paloaltoairport.aero)

Palo Alto Airport



Noise Contours (CNEL) 2022 Aircraft Noise Contours  
55 60 65 70  
Figure 5  
0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet

CNEL is shown in decibels (dB), which are logarithmic representations of energy or perceived noise level. Each 10 dB corresponds to a factor of ten. Thus 70 dB is 100 times 50 dB. Extrapolating from the plot, it appears that the noise level west of 101 probably is less than 40 dB CNEL or about 1/300<sup>th</sup> the 65 dB level considered the maximum level acceptable for residential areas. In other words, it's hardly noticeable.

Since the contours are indicative of traffic density, it's also clear that very little of the yearly amount of 1200 lbs. of lead in aircraft exhaust in the vicinity of the airport ends up in the Palo Alto residential area. Still, an early end for lead in avgas is to be hoped for.

