

# Mountain Democrat

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99 CENTS

## Sacto board OKs Mather's 20-year plan

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[From page A1](#) | August 20, 2014 |

SACRAMENTO — Despite hundreds of formal complaints that Mather Airport's nighttime air cargo operations are noisy enough as is, the Sacramento Board of Supervisors voted 3-1 Aug. 12 to beef them up when they approved a 20-year-development plan and revised Environmental Impact Report. The master plan includes lengthening runways and upgrading the airport's navigation aid, or Instrument Landing System, to a Category IIIb, meaning aircraft are allowed to begin approach if visibility is greater than 300 feet instead of the current half-mile requirement. Of the \$107 million in capital costs for the plan, the new ILS costs nearly \$1 million, though airport staff explained how currently only six flights per year are diverted because of fog.

"All that money for six flights a year?" Folsom Mayor Kerri Howell asked during the public comment portion. "I've got 5,000 people getting woken up. By 2035 it'll be 15,000."

During the nearly five-hour meeting supervisors asked staff and even a noise expert mostly about the two biggest complaints constituents have about the EIR and 20-year plan: increased nighttime noise and why the air cargo operations that were moved from Sacramento International Airport (SMF) in 1997 can't be moved back to SMF, where there is already a Category IIIb landing system in place, especially since air cargo operations are only expected to grow by 2 percent annually.

Supervisors Jimmie Yee and Phil Serna both pressed county and airport staff to answer why returning air cargo operations back to SMF was dismissed in the plan, which has been revised three times since 2001, and not explored as a viable option. Staff said because noise was deemed "less than significant" in the EIR they dismissed an alternative location to study.

The noise expert said 14 locations were tested during a 24-hour period to see if any single event noise averaged more than 65 dbl or above. State and federal regulators define aircraft noise of 65 dbl or above too much for schools, churches and residences. "No one is exposed to 65 now, nor will they be," said the noise expert.

"Give me your phone number and I'll call you to hear the noise in the middle of the night from cargo jets," said Folsom resident Gail Lee.

"Every morning UPS 960 flies smack over our heads at 4:50 a.m.," said Rescue resident Don Van Dyke. "It's not the (Beale Air Force Base) military flights during the day that are the problem; it's the cargo flights at night that are the problem."

El Dorado County's Development Services Division Director Roger Trout said he came to speak on behalf of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. "In their opinion, this is not a good project," he said. "You need to balance a number of competing principles here, not just economic stimulus but also quality of life,

traffic, property values and safety considerations...It's the nighttime overhead flights we have the problem with. We're just asking you to be good neighbors."

El Dorado County officials have also expressed concern because the ILS was purchased before Tuesday's vote and approval. Meanwhile the Sacramento Bee published an article correctly stating the plan passed by 3-1 two hours before the meeting adjourned.

Between 2012 and 2035 the EIR states the potential for nighttime awakenings for people living further from the airport is projected to increase from 0.1 percent to 4.7 percent. Areas closer to the airport should expect a 2.5 percent to 12.6 percent increase, deemed "insignificant" in the report.

"When I see the percentage increases, it's difficult for me to conclude it's not significant," said Sacramento County Supervisor Roberta MacGlashan, who represents the Folsom area.

Today Mather Airport loses at least \$1 million annually, but making it "a premiere jet cargo hub of the Pacific Rim" would make it profitable once more, El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Committee's Mather Review Chairman Larry Brilliant said earlier this spring.

Permanent job creation and increased revenue were touted should the project be approved at Tuesday's meeting. Rancho Cordova City Councilwoman Linda Budge said she spoke for her community. "This is a part of our regional competitiveness," she said. "This is a part of the next economy. If we ignore this incredible asset we actually do ourselves a disservice."

Earlier Serna asked, "How unique is Mather Airport?"

"It's a reliever airport and there are few reliever airports in the United States," said Sacramento County Airport System Manager for Planning and Environment Glen Rickleton. "They get smaller aircraft out of the system so we have more capacity and less interference with landing capacity at Sacramento."

Though Deputy Director of the Sacramento County Airport System Carl Mosher said Federal Express would also move to Mather from Sacramento International Airport subject to the installation of CAT III ILS in an earlier e-mail, when Yee asked, "Has FedEx expressed a desire to move to Mather?"

Rickleton answered, "No."

Staff said supervisors would still have a chance to approve project components piecemeal in the future. Mather Review committee member and Folsom resident Bill Bryant told the Mountain Democrat there are 48,000 annual cargo flights at Mather now. There were only 12,000 in 2000 when cargo operations were first ramping up. With the new plan, "Who knows how many flights that will mean," he said. El Dorado Hills resident Paul Raveling spoke at the meeting and said he figured the new plan would average only 4.2 more flights per day.

In the end, Sacramento County Supervisors Don Nottoli, Jimmie Yee and Phil Serna approved the project, stating the airport wasn't meant to languish when it was given to the county by the U.S. Air Force in 1993. MacGlashan, who represents Folsom and had the most concerned residents speak at the meeting, voted against it. Supervisor Susan Peters recused herself from the vote because she owns property at Mather Field.