

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

Dear Ms. Turner,

I am writing today to update you on the issue of airplane noise in the La Jolla and Bird Rock neighborhoods. My staff has been working closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (Airport Authority) for several years, advocating on behalf of your concerns, and serving as a liaison between these agencies and your communities.

My wife and I have lived in La Jolla for over 27 years; it's a neighborhood we love and it's our home. Like you, we too, from time to time, experience ambient airplane noise. We understand that there will always be some level of environmental noise when living in any thriving metropolitan area. We also know that San Diego is a growing city, and as our military, innovation, and tourism sectors grow, so too will our region's commerce and demand for travel. At the same time, we are committed to maintaining the high quality of life that defines our region.

I've been working hard on quality of life with respect to airplane noise. My office and I worked with the FAA as it updated traffic control technology, flight paths, and air safety protocols, through the process known as "Metroplex." At the community's urging, we requested and secured an extension to the FAA's SoCal Metroplex Environmental Assessment public comment period to better facilitate community participation. I personally met with Lindbergh Field (SAN), Air Traffic Control, and FAA headquarters here to learn what operational challenges they face, and I worked closely with the Airport Authority and the Airport Noise Advisory Committee to create a more inclusive and transparent process for community engagement. Metroplex was adopted and we were pleased to be able to incorporate protections against flight path changes in the final action that were good for neighborhoods in Point Loma.

As you know, the right plan is a good start; that plan also must be honored in practice. So I also have had a member of my staff at every Airport Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC) meeting to advocate for communities like ours. My staff and I met with La Jolla and Bird Rock residents in our office and in your neighborhoods. And we participated in the subcommittee meetings that focused solely on La Jolla and Bird Rock, where we urged the FAA and Airport Authority to be receptive to your concerns and to learn how best we could respond.

Most recently, in June, my District Chief of Staff met with Airport Authority leadership regarding your neighborhood's concerns, and I met with the new Airport Authority President and CEO and the Chair of the Airport Authority. As we have done for some time, we again conveyed the high level of frustration from the residents about airplane noise and asked very direct questions about its origins and potential solutions. In response, the Airport Authority reiterated its commitment to pinpoint the cause of noise complaints in our area.

Now, at last, we have received information that helps explain the problem. The Airport Authority has been comparing flight patterns and altitudes over La Jolla and Bird Rock from before and after the implementation of Metroplex. In general, aircraft altitudes have increased, which is positive from the perspective of noise. However, the data also showed that the flights that are generating many of the complaints do not originate from SAN. The average altitude of aircraft arriving into SAN and flying above the La Jolla region used to average approximately 7,781 feet in altitude (before Metroplex). After Metroplex implementation, that altitude average increased to 8,036 feet. Altitudes for aircraft operating out of other regional airports, such as Montgomery Field and Gillespie Field, were also reviewed. Prior to Metroplex, they averaged 2,283 feet and there was a slight increase in altitude after Metroplex to 2,615 feet.

As explained at the last ANAC meeting, noise, flight and complaint data indicate that complaints they receive from La Jolla and Bird Rock are primarily the result of air traffic from Montgomery Field, Gillespie Field, and other General Aviation aircraft that fly into and out of airports other than SAN. Noise Programs for these airports are run by the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego, respectively.

Given this data, I will be strongly urging the San Diego City Council, the Mayor and the County Board of Supervisors to work with you and the Airport Authority to closely examine this data to determine exactly why an uptick in noise complaints exists from air traffic generated by these airports, how their noise complaint process can better facilitate communications from you, and what can be done to fix the problem.

Finally, while the data reveals that the majority of the noise is not generated by Lindbergh Field air traffic, I will continue to work closely with the FAA to make sure that those flights within FAA purview will follow the guidelines our community depends on.

Thank you again for reaching out to my office. We are committed to staying engaged on this and will keep you updated on the progress of our inquiry.

Sincerely,



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



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