



Complaints flying over Mather

By Ryan Rose
The Telegraph

The noise about Mather airport is earsplitting – and that’s just the complaints.

Area residents were quick to express frustration with Sacramento County Airport System (SCAS) representatives during town hall meetings held last week in Folsom and Cameron Park.

Corporate jet pilot Mike Gallagher and Noise Abatement Manager Monica Newhouse reported preliminary findings from the recent test examining approaches into Mather Airport, which was simply: people don’t like nighttime flybys.

The test, which ran from July 15 through the morning of Nov. 14, was conducted by the FAA and the airport system.

The test was developed to “empirically evaluate an alternative to the ILS approach to mitigate noise east of Mather Airport at night,” Gallagher explained during his presentation.

After receiving numerous complaints about nighttime noise, the existing ILS approach over Folsom and northern El Dorado Hills was supplemented for 120 days with the VOR/DME approach over Cameron Park and the Serrano community in El Dorado Hills.

Cargo pilots could use both the flight paths, while the SCAS recorded preference and noise levels.

Although local governments originally endorsed the tests, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and the City of Folsom rescinded their support after receiving noise complaints from residents.

El Dorado County Supervisor Rusty Dupray was one of the first to voice his constituents’ dismay — asking the test be concluded prior to its scheduled completion.

Dupray felt the test only succeeded in moving noise from one area to another, which Gallagher reports is against FAA procedures.

Dupray wasn’t the only person expressing concern about the test. According to their records, the SCAS received a total of 4,019 complaints—1,987 complaints were related to the nighttime operations and 984 of those complaints were connected to aircraft operating during test hours. The SCAS catalogued complaints along with the number of households calling.

VORDME approach drew 151 complaints from 47 households in El Dorado Hills, while 72 calls were placed from 6 Folsom homes.

The existing ILS approach told a different story: 64 complaints came from 24 El Dorado Hills homes while 150 complaints came from 7 households in Folsom.

All together, it was determined the SCAS received complaints from as far east as Placerville and as far west as Sacramento. During the VORDME, complaints were higher in outlying regions east of El Dorado Hills, while Folsom’s were lower and conversely during ILS flybys. The ILS is again the airport’s main approach route.

Final results from the test will be annualized for a period of 60 days or more by the FAA Los Angeles branch.

Not satisfied with the test and the SCAS, some Folsom residents are discussing a possible lawsuit over the noise—disturbed that the FAA shifted noisy cargo flights from Sacramento International Airport to Mather Airport, but is unwilling to shift noise a second time. Residents don’t want Mather becoming a “major cargo hub.”

Yet regardless of residents' opinions, the Mather issue continues to take off in new forms. A letter sent by Dupray to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors requesting a public roundtable will be reviewed in March, after the Sacramento supervisors examine a proposed extension of Mather's back-up runway along with infrastructure construction. Dupray's letter was tabled for March by the Sacramento board until a decision was made on the airport's expansion.

To file grievances regarding flight noise with the Sacramento County Airport System, call 874-0800 or email

millerR@saccounty.net.