

RANTING ABOUT SMO LANDING FEES

By Candy Robinson

Several years ago, SMO instituted landing fees for general aviation aircraft. The fee is \$2.07 per 1000 pounds gross landing weight, which works out to \$4.14 per occurrence.

The “profit” margin for rental aircraft is abysmal, in the neighborhood of \$5.00 per hour if all goes well. The billing, done by Vector Airport Solutions, apparently goes out after the end of the month, so we are notified as much as four weeks in arrears that the expense has been incurred.

In the beginning, we attempted to determine the renter pilot responsible, based on cross-referencing the schedule book and the monthly hobbs time logged for each aircraft. The capture rate for us to re-bill the correct pilot was less than 100% as the occasionally there is not an accurate correlation between the two documents. The administrative expense was upwards of \$25 per occurrence. Add to the internal complications of balancing the checkbook for a check for \$4.14; we had an early check returned because it had been already paid by parties unknown between the time we were billed and we sent in our payment.

Additionally, much of our customer base is from outside the area, so often we would not be able to collect the landing fee for Vector.

Why isn't the landing fee being collected at the time it is incurred?
Is there an implied contract that we do collections for Vector?

If we absorb the SMO landing fee, we lose money with each rental that goes to SMO. We have been hesitant to discourage use of Santa Monica Airport as, we are sure, part of the intent of the landing fee is to limit the use of the airport. Additionally, if other airports in the LA basin follow suit, office support expenses would never be able to keep up with the paperwork.

A main source of the problem is with our leaseback aircraft. Vector is being more aggressive with their collection efforts, threatening one aircraft owner that his aircraft will be banned from the airport. We're not sure how that threat will be carried out – when reporting downwind, will the pilot be advised that landing is denied based on his n-number?

The expense of Vector's collection efforts must far exceed the amounts being pursued. At this time, the amounts are \$30 to \$60 each aircraft. We are fine having the aircraft that are not on leaseback continue to tally up the fees; if Vector continues the harassment then at least we'll have our day in court.

CITY [OF SANTA MONICA] CONSIDERS PAYING PILOTS TO FLY ELSEWHERE

Whopping price tag assigned to cost of getting pilots training at Santa Monica Airport to conduct repetitive takeoffs and landings at other airports.

By Jenna Chandler
June 12, 2012

The cost of a quieter Santa Monica Airport? About \$90,000 in six months.

That's the price tag city staffers give an incentive program for flight schools aimed at reducing repetitive takeoff and landings by student pilots.

The program is in response to complaints from neighbors, particularly those who live within hundreds of feet of the airport tarmac, who say they are tormented by aircraft noise.

Participating flight schools would receive \$150 for each flight that resulted in a minimum of four takeoffs and four landings conducted at other airports on weekends and federal holidays. City staffers said it has the potential of resulting in up to 4,800 fewer takeoffs and landings during a six-month test period starting July 1.

The "Flight Training Reduction Incentive Test Program" is up for approval Tuesday night by the Santa Monica City Council.

Money for the reimbursements—designed to offset the schools' cost of traveling to a different airport—would come from the city's general fund, a catchall account for services such as the police and fire departments and library system.

About 40 percent of Santa Monica Airport traffic is generated by aircraft that stay within the local traffic pattern or the airport's designated controlled airspace, and many of those operations are takeoffs and landings by pilots-in-training, according to Airport Services Director Robert Trimborn.

"Airport staff receives numerous noise complaints from residents regarding these repetitive types of local operations especially during weekends and holidays when most people are at home," Trimborn wrote in a memo to the City Council.

City staffers said flight schools support the program and agree it would reduce the number of repetitive takeoffs and landings.

The City Council meets at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, at 1685 Main St.

<http://santamonica.patch.com/articles/santa-monica-to-consider-paying-pilots-to-fly-elsewhere>

FLIGHT SCHOOL INCENTIVE PROGRAM TO GET MORE VETTING

Proposal to pay flight schools to conduct repetitive takeoff and landings at airports other than Santa Monica's will now go to the city's airport commission before it's reviewed by the City Council.

By Jenna Chandler
June 13, 2012

Before it decides to pay Santa Monica-based flight schools to conduct repetitive takeoff and landings elsewhere, the City Council will get feedback from its advisory board.

A new incentive program designed to reduce noise at the Santa Monica Airport by diverting it to other airports was up for City Council approval Tuesday night, but was pulled from the agenda that afternoon so it could first be vetted by the Airport Commission at its meeting June 25.

Santa Monica's Director of Public Works Martin Pastucha said the concept had already been discussed in past meetings of the Airport Commission. The specific proposal itself, however, has not.

"We've talked to the commissioners about the program before, but this is really a financial decision," he said. "We have no problem waiting and giving it to the commission at the end of June."

Under the proposal, participating flight schools would receive \$150 for each flight that resulted in a minimum of four takeoffs and four landings conducted at other airports on weekends and federal holidays. City staffers said it has the potential of resulting in up to 4,800 fewer takeoffs and landings during a six-month test period starting July 1.

Residents who live near the Santa Monica Airport have asked the city to come up with ways to curtail aircraft activity that they say is too noisy and toxic. But some expressed concerns about this proposal,

which would be funded with taxpayer dollars. Some speculated the flight schools would turn profits off the city's payments because they are already paid by student pilots \$123 per hour for aircraft time.

"I'd say running a flight school out of SMO is a lucrative business, thanks to the City and its taxpayers," wrote one Patch reader in a comment board.

But Pastucha said the schools are more likely to break-even, because the cost of operating the planes is about \$250-275 per hour. The \$150 will cover the school's costs, such as for gas, of traveling to airports as far as 20 minutes away, he said.

Pastucha predicts they'll fly north so student pilots can avoid LAX.

Some Torrance residents were up in arms Tuesday out of concern they might be impacted by the proposal, and asked the Santa Monica City Council for the opportunity to weigh in.

"Residents living near the Torrance Airport already experience significant negative impacts from too many training flights conducted at Torrance Airport," Richard Root wrote in an email to the City Council. I would be opposed to any change that would increase the number of those flights in our area and, if they knew about it, I would expect many other residents would also.

Pastucha said it would be up to the flight schools to determine which airports they flew into, and that city staffers do not plan to look into how the proposal might affect neighboring cities.

<http://santamonica.patch.com/articles/flight-school-incentive-program-to-get-more-vetting>

**JON RODGERS AVIATION CONSULTING
EXPERT WITNESS SERVICES
SPECIALIST IN NOISE MITIGATION**

“Everyone wants to live near an airport for travel convenience, but nobody wants an airport near where they live.” (Charles Spence, General Aviation News, March 19, 2004)

June 15, 2012

**TO ALL FLIGHT SCHOOLS AND CFI's IN SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA**

AS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, SANTA MONICA (SMO) IS PROPOSING TO PAY (READ “BRIBE”) THEIR BASED FLIGHT SCHOOLS TO DIVERT TOUCH & GO'S AND OTHER FLIGHT TRAINING OPERATIONS TO OTHER AIRPORTS.

THIS FOLLOWS A RECENT MOVE BY THE LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL TO LOBBY THE FAA OR SOME OTHER ENTITY TO CLOSE THE AIRPORT.

THESE CONDITIONS AND THE LONG-STANDING HOSTILE ATTITUDE AT SANTA MONICA MAKE IT VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE TARGETED FLIGHT SCHOOLS WILL GO ALONG WITH THIS CHEAP STUNT OUT OF SHEER TERROR, UNLESS PILOTS COME TOGETHER TO STOP IT. BE AWARE THAT NOT STOPPING IT COULD ALSO CAUSE COMMUNITY BACKLASH AT YOUR HOME AIRPORTS.

HOWEVER, THERE IS A SOLUTION: OCCASIONALLY DIVERT SOME TOUCH & GO OPERATIONS TO SANTA MONICA, AND THROW IN SOME LOW APPROACHES AND GO-AROUND'S FOR GOOD MEASURE. PARTICIPATION IS KEY BECAUSE THE GREATER THE PARTICIPATION, THE STRONGER THE MESSAGE. IT IS LONG PAST THE TIME TO BRING RATIONAL THINKING INTO THE SANTA MONICA NOISE ISSUE.

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MONDAY'S [SANTA MONICA] AIRPORT COMMISSION MEETING CANCELED

Commissioners were scheduled to review a proposal to pay flight schools to conduct repetitive takeoffs and landings at airports outside of Santa Monica.

By Jenna Chandler
June 21, 2012

Without a quorum, the Airport Commission's Monday meeting has been canceled.

It was supposed to review a controversial, noise-reducing proposal to pay Santa Monica-based flight schools to conduct repetitive takeoffs and landings elsewhere. Now, the proposal is on the City Council's Tuesday agenda.

Airports neighbors and community leaders in neighboring cities with airports had asked that the commission review the proposal before the City Council. The plan was to roll out the incentives starting in July for a six month testing period.

Under the proposal, participating flight schools would receive \$150 for each flight that resulted in a minimum of four takeoffs and four landings conducted at other airports on weekends and federal holidays. City staffers said it has the potential of resulting in up to 4,800 fewer takeoffs and landings during the test period.

The cost of the program over six months was estimated at \$90,000.

The commission's next regularly scheduled meeting July 23.

<http://santamonica.patch.com/articles/monday-s-airport-commission-meeting-canceled>

SANTA MONICA POLICE ARREST FLIGHT SCHOOL NAIL CULPRIT

By Jorge Casuso

June 6, 2012 -- A Venice man was arrested Thursday night after he was caught tossing nails into the driveways of flight schools flanking the municipal airport.

Jeremiah Aaron Kean Mayman, 31, was observed by airport police who had been on alert after six similar incidents at Santa Monica flights schools were reported over the past several months, police officials said.

"It's been done several times before with the same nails in the same manner," said Sgt. Richard Lewis, the Police Department spokesman. "We had added patrols and were on the lookout."

Lewis said investigators are trying to determine if Mayman, who was tossing nails as he rode his bicycle on Airport Avenue Thursday night, is responsible for the other incidents.

In each reported, case, 1.5-inch roofing nails were found on the driveways of different flight schools along the street, police said.

Hundreds of nails were used in the incidents, police said.

The first nails were found in late March, but it was not until more nails were found on a flight school driveway on April 18 that a police report was filed.

Mayam was arrested for attempted felony vandalism and was released on \$20,000 bail.

http://surfsantamonica.com/ssm_site/the_lookout/news/News-2012/June-2012/06_06_2012_Santa_Monica_Police_Arrest_Flight_School_Nail_Culprit.html

GROUPON GRIPE

May 24, 2012 -- SANTA MONICA (CBS) — Some residents in Santa Monica are upset that the same flight school whose student pilot landed a plane on a house last year recently offered a discount on lessons.

Hundreds of Groupons have been sold for discounted flying lessons offered by Justice Aviation at Santa Monica Airport. Residents like Martin Rubin say Justice is putting their safety in the hands of thrill-seeking amateurs.

“It’s just another example of just complete disregard for the effects of this airport on the community,” Rubin told CBS2’s Serene Branson.

Residents also say the wording of the initial ad was in poor taste. It stated that novice pilots could “man the controls and try steep turns while flying over the Santa Monica Pier, Malibu Hills and scenic landmarks.”

“The sound of some of these old planes they sound like they’re on their last... they sound like they’re getting ready to stop... and you think they’re gonna come down,” Rubin said.

In August of 2011, the flight school was in the news when a student pilot nose dived into a blocked wall of a Santa Monica home, which was under construction at the time.

But Joe Justice, owner and operator of the flight school, spoke to CBS2’s Serene Branson in his first interview since then to set the record straight about the accident and the deal.

“It was a student pilot by himself, that’s correct, but these Groupon flights all have an instructor on board. Those maneuvers are not done until we get out of the practice area and that’s like offshore Malibu,” he said.

Justice also touted their safety record, noting they’ve had no major crashes with a certified pilot on board in 21 years. He also pointed out that they don’t write the group ads and they altered the wording in their second one.

“That ad had some bad wording in it. I wish it hadn’t happened. I wish I could have caught the text before it went out but the next ad that did go out for the next campaign was very softly worded,” he explained.

The airport lease is up in 2015 and Justice says the push to shut it down continues to get lift off.

“Well there’s controversy at everything in Santa Monica Airport. There is a small group of people that basically would like to see the airport close and at every opportunity they question everything that’s done here,” Justice added.

<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2012/05/24/some-santa-monica-residents-upset-over-flight-schools-groupon/>