

April 09, 2024

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

Re-envisioning Whiteman Airport: Expanding Economic Opportunities

The Pacoima community within the vicinity of Whiteman Airport has voiced serious concerns about the impacts of the airport on health and safety. On December 8, 2020, the Board adopted a motion directing Public Works to engage local stakeholders to undertake a community-driven master plan for Whiteman Airport that maintains the property's primary function as an airport but provides for the creation of local jobs, community beneficial uses, and open space opportunities.

The Board also instructed Public Works to create a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide residents with opportunities for local input on airport operations, and to conduct appropriate environmental studies to assess the airport's potential environmental and health risks. At its conclusion, the CAC made recommendations for improving various aspects of airport operations, and also recommended that the Board consider closure of the airport.

On January 25, 2022, the Board instructed Public Works to collaborate with the Chief Executive Office to explore the initial steps in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) airport closure application process. The resulting report identified four primary tasks that focus on the impacts to aviation interests in meeting FAA requirements in considering airport closure. These tasks include an assessment of current conditions, regional aviation impacts, financial analysis, and impacts on aviation operations.

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Although no final decision has been made to close Whiteman Airport, it is prudent at this time to investigate all potential impacts of airport closure to the Pacoima community and the County. These impacts could include alternative land uses, benefits to the local economy, and financial implications for the County airport system.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with the Department of Public Works, to report back in 60 days with a plan and cost estimate to conduct a study of potential land uses for the 184-acre Whiteman Airport Property, both as an operational airport and if the airport were to close, along with an economic analysis of the impacts to the County and the Pacoima community if the airport were to close. The economic analysis should include:

1. Community jobs created and resulting direct, indirect, and induced effects.
2. Financial implications of existing airport property contract rights and prior lease agreements.
3. Impacts to airport businesses.
4. Financial impacts to the overall system of five County airports.
5. An appraisal of the fair market value of the land and existing improvements.

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