



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Air Traffic Organization  
Western Service Center

DEC 10 A 10:37

1601 Lind Ave SW.  
Renton, WA 98057

December 4, 2012

The Hon. Bill O'Brien  
Chairman  
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors  
1010 10th St., Suite 6500  
Modesto, CA 95354

Reference: **Environmental Assessment  
Northern California Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Metroplex  
Early Notification Letter**

Dear Chairman O'Brien:

This notification letter is to inform you that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the potential environmental impacts of the implementation of the Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Metroplex (OAPM) in the Northern California area (NorCal OAPM). Attachment 1 is a copy of the Notice that will be published in major newspapers in the Northern California area (Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose) that notifies the general public of the FAA's intent to prepare an EA.

A "Metroplex" is multiple airports in and around a busy metropolitan area. The NorCal OAPM would improve the efficiency of the NorCal Metroplex airspace by optimizing aircraft arrival and departure procedures at a number of airports, including San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland International Airport (OAK), Sacramento International Airport (SMF), and San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC). The project may involve changes in aircraft flight paths and/or altitudes in certain areas, but would not require any ground disturbance or increase the number of aircraft operations within the Northern California Metroplex airspace area.

To evaluate potential environmental impacts of the NorCal OAPM project, the FAA will establish a General Study Area (GSA) to evaluate potential impacts of changes in aircraft routing that are proposed to occur below 10,000 feet above ground level (AGL). The GSA is subject to change and would be finalized during the environmental review process.

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Northern California OAPM  
12/4/12  
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The FAA has begun preparation of the EA and intends to issue the Draft in late 2013. We welcome your input as we prepare the EA and we are sending this early notification letter for the following reasons:

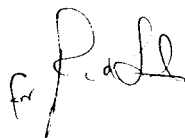
1. To advise you of the initiation of the EA study;
2. To provide you an opportunity to provide any background information that you may have regarding the study area established for this EA; and
3. To provide you an opportunity to advise the FAA of any issues, concerns, policies or regulations that you may have regarding the environmental analysis that will be undertaken in the EA.

Public participation will also be incorporated in the EA process and will be announced in the future. Public workshops will be conducted to provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the project and to submit comments. The FAA plans to hold separate consultations with the appropriate Tribal Governments and their designated Tribal Historic Preservation Office in accordance with Executive Order 13175, if applicable. The appropriate Tribal Governments and their designated Tribal Historic Preservation Office will be determined after the GSA is finalized.

FAA is currently working on additional details related to this project, and will be coordinating with the appropriate agencies and tribes in the near future. If you desire to provide comments and/or have any questions about the information provided, please provide them by letter or email, before January 18, 2013, at the following address:

Attn: Ryan Weller  
Western Service Center, Operations Support Group  
1601 Lind Ave SW  
Renton, WA 98057  
Telephone: (425) 203-4544  
Email: 7-ANM-NorCalOAPM@faa.gov

Sincerely,



John Warner  
Manager, Operations Support Group  
Western Service Center

Attachment – Public Notice

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**Federal Aviation Administration**

Notice of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) intention to prepare a Draft Environmental Assessment for the Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Northern California Metroplex (NorCal OAPM).

**SUMMARY:** The FAA is issuing this notice to advise the public it intends to prepare a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the NorCal OAPM Metroplex, which involves flight procedure optimization for Oakland International Airport (OAK), Sacramento International Airport (SMF), San Francisco International Airport (SFO), and San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC). The EA will be conducted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and its implementing Regulations found at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 1500-1508.

The purpose of the proposed NorCal OAPM is to improve the efficiency of the controlled airspace (a generic term referring to airspace where air traffic control service is provided) using more current navigation technology called Area Navigation (RNAV). The FAA has not made any decisions about the final content of the EA.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Air traffic procedures operating in the airspace near Oakland International Airport (OAK), Sacramento International Airport (SMF), San Francisco International Airport (SFO), and San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC) (the major EA Airports), will be evaluated in the draft EA. The current procedures, which are intended to provide an orderly flow of traffic in and out of a busy metropolitan area, are dependent upon navigational aids on the ground and/or air traffic controller issued radar vectors. Ground-based navigational aids have limited capabilities, which dictate the location of a route in/out of the airspace. Radar vectors involve multiple communication transmissions between an air traffic controller and a pilot. RNAV technology is not limited to ground-based navigational aids and not subject to the same limitations. Therefore, RNAV-based procedures can direct pilots along more direct routes with predictable location and altitude information. A predictable procedure would involve less communication between an air traffic controller and a pilot; therefore reducing workload for both individuals. The application of RNAV technology for the NorCal Metroplex would enhance efficient use of the airspace.

***Proposed Action***

The EA is expected to evaluate at least two alternatives, the No Action and the proposed NorCal OAPM alternative (the Proposed Action). The FAA has not finalized the proposed NorCal OAPM at this time. The proposed NorCal OAPM as it is currently being configured consists of optimizing aircraft routes within the controlled airspace into and out of the NorCal Metroplex. The primary components of the proposed NorCal OAPM would include:

- **ESTABLISHING UPDATED DEPARTURE ROUTES AND/OR FIXES FROM THE EA AIRPORTS.** Aircraft departing from the EA Airports would transition to the high altitude routes using optimized routes based on RNAV technology.

- **ESTABLISHING UPDATED ARRIVAL ROUTES AND/OR FIXES INTO THE EA AIRPORTS.** Aircraft bound for the EA Airports would use optimized procedures to transition from a high altitude route to an existing approach route.

Implementation of the proposed NorCal OAPM is not anticipated to increase the number of aircraft operations at OAK, SMF, SFO, or SJC or involve physical construction of any facilities.

#### ***General Study Area***

Using radar data for the EA study airports and the initial proposed design changes, the FAA will identify a general study area in which changes to aircraft routing would occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

The general study area will be used to evaluate and compare the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and reasonable alternatives. This evaluation will occur where departing aircraft are anticipated to be at altitudes below 10,000 feet above ground level (AGL) and arriving aircraft at altitudes below 7,000 feet AGL under the Proposed or the No Action alternative. The FAA may also consider traffic flying over tribal lands, national parks or national wildlife refuges below 18,000 feet AGL to evaluate and compare the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative.

#### **PUBLIC WORKSHOPS**

FAA intends to hold public workshops following publication of the Draft EA. FAA will provide public notice of the public workshops and the availability of the Draft EA at a future date.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Federal Aviation Administration, Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Western Service Center Attn: NorCal OAPM Environmental, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW, Renton, WA 98057; email at [7-ANM-NorCalOAPM@faa.gov](mailto:7-ANM-NorCalOAPM@faa.gov); or facsimile at 425-203-4505.