



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

Office of the Air Traffic Organization
Western Service Area

1601 Lind Avenue Southwest
Renton, Washington 98057

August 27, 2013

The Hon. Vito Chiesa
Chairman
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors
1010 10th St., Suite 6500
Modesto, CA 95354

**Subject: Environmental Assessment – Northern California Optimization of Airspace
and Procedures in the Metroplex (NorCal OAPM) Project Meeting Notification**

Dear Chairman Chiesa:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) for the above-titled project. The FAA cordially invites you to attend an informational meeting to discuss the EA currently being prepared for this project. This meeting is intended to provide an overview of the project and project timelines. The FAA anticipates issuing a draft EA for public review and comment, and conducting public meetings in 2014.

The EA will consider the potential impacts of the implementation of revised air traffic routes and procedures in the Northern California region. The air traffic routes and procedures serve the San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland Metropolitan International Airport (OAK), Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport (SJC), and Sacramento International Airport (SMF). Please see the enclosed brief description of the project.

For your convenience, informational meetings have been scheduled at four locations:

September 16, 2013
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

California State Capitol Building
Governor’s Council Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

September 17, 2013
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

City of San Mateo Main Library
Oak Meeting Room
55 West 3rd Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94402

September 18, 2013
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

San José City Hall
Meeting Room W-118
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

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September 18, 2013
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Oakland Main Library
Meeting Room
125 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94612

We request that you confirm your attendance via email to cas@casprograms.com no later than September 10, 2013.

If you have any questions about the information provided or if you are not able to attend this meeting and need to make other arrangements, please contact Ryan Weller at (425) 203-4544; or email at 7-ANM-NorCalOAPM@faa.gov; or facsimile at (425) 203-4505.

Sincerely,



Clark Desing
Manager, Operations Support Group
Western Service Center

Enclosure

NorCal OAPM Environmental Assessment Overview

This document provides a brief description of the Environmental Assessment (EA) being prepared by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for the Northern California Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Metroplex (NorCal OAPM) project. The following sections describe the Proposed Action, its Purpose and Need, Alternatives, and the Affected Environment. The Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action will be evaluated as project planning commences.

1 Background

The FAA is preparing an EA pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 4321 et seq.) to assess the potential environmental effects associated with the optimization of aircraft routes serving aircraft operating under instrument flight rules (IFR) in the Northern California Metroplex (the Proposed Action). A Metroplex is a geographic area covering several airports, serving major metropolitan areas and a diversity of aviation stakeholders. The majority of IFR flights in the Northern California area operate at San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland Metropolitan International Airport (OAK), Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport (SJC), and Sacramento International Airport (SMF). For purposes of the EA, these four airports are referred to as the Study Airports. The Proposed Action is referred to as the NorCal OAPM.

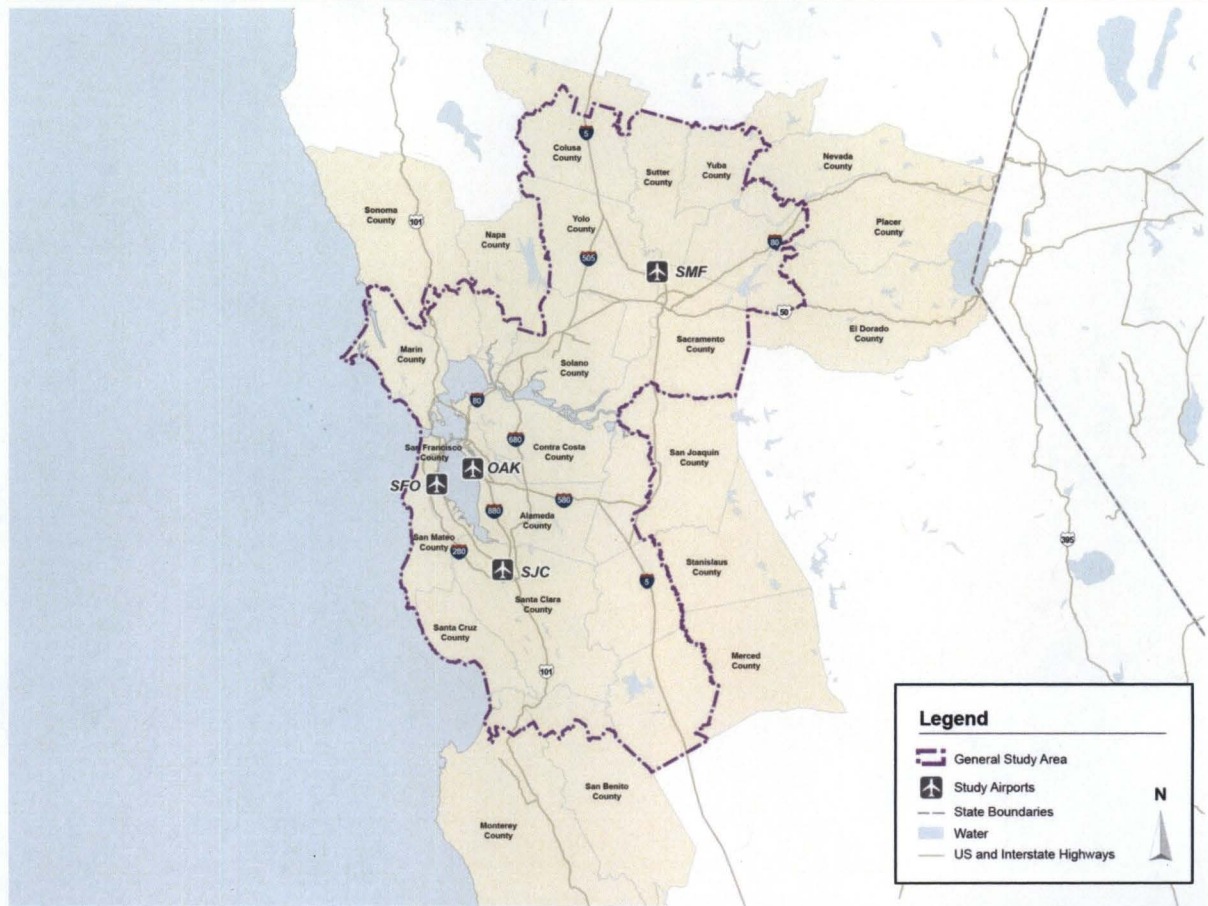
Analysis and documentation for an EA is similar to that of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) but requires less detail and less intensive coordination than is required for an EIS. Depending upon whether certain environmental thresholds of significance are exceeded, an EA will either lead to a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or to the subsequent preparation of an EIS.

The FAA will make the Draft EA available to the public for review and comment. After consideration of any public comments, a Final EA will be produced, which will include responses to the public comments. The federal decision-makers will use the Final EA in their determination to approve or disapprove the Proposed Action.

The format and content of the EA conforms to the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] Parts 1500-1508). The document also conforms to the environmental orders of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), DOT Order 5610.1C, *Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*, and FAA Order 1050.1E, Change 1, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*.

The General Study Area for this EA is depicted in **Exhibit 1**. The General Study Area was defined based on FAA's previous experience with similar air traffic actions. The extent of the General Study Area allows for a reasonable evaluation of potential impacts associated with aircraft flight path changes under the Proposed Action, which involves flight route modifications. The Airspace structure in the Northern California Metroplex is controlled by the Northern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON), referred to as NCT, as well as the Oakland Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC), referred to as ZOA or Oakland Center.

Exhibit 1 NorCal OAPM General Study Area



Source: National Atlas of the United States of America: U.S. County Boundaries, 2005; ATAC Corporation, August 2012.

Prepared by: ATAC Corporation, August 2013.

2 Purpose and Need

In the context of an EA, “need” refers to the problem that the Proposed Action is intended to resolve. The problem in this case is the inefficiency of the existing aircraft flight procedures (i.e., the routes along which aircraft operate) in the Northern California Metroplex. This is due to a variety of factors, including aircraft using outdated Standard Instrument Departure (SID) and Standard Terminal Arrival Route (STAR) procedures to and from the Study Airports that were designed based on point-to-point ground-based navigational aids (NAVAIDs). Procedures that are based on ground-based NAVAIDs, referred to as conventional procedures, limit the efficiency of the Northern California Metroplex airspace. Data indicates that a majority of aircraft operating in the Metroplex are not following the published SID and STAR procedures because the procedures are outdated and inefficient.

Currently, over 95 percent of commercial aircraft are equipped with the technology to use Area Navigation (RNAV). RNAV-based procedures are free of the limitations inherent in conventional procedures and allow for the development of procedures with more direct routings than is practical with conventional procedures. Accordingly, more efficient routes

supporting the Study Airports can be developed. RNAV technology can add efficiency to an air traffic system with enhanced predictability, flexibility, and route segregation. The purpose of the FAA's Proposed Action is to improve the efficiency of the routes serving the Study Airports and reduce the complexity of the routes while maintaining a safe air traffic system.

3 Alternatives

The EA will consider reasonable alternatives in compliance with FAA Order 1050.1E and the CEQ regulations (40 C.F.R. § 1502.14). Alternatives will include the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative (the latter was examined in accordance with CEQ [40 C.F.R. § 1502.14d]). The No Action Alternative would maintain existing procedures, in other words, aircraft routing would not change. The Proposed Action would result in changes to aircraft routes by defining new procedures and modifying the supporting airspace management system to fulfill, to the extent possible, the defined objectives to assess the ability of the alternatives to meet the FAA's Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action.

4 Affected Environment

The primary function of the Affected Environment chapter of an EA is to describe pre-project conditions, not the action-induced impacts. The chapter provides a baseline description of the existing environment's biological, economic, physical, and social conditions within the General Study Area. **Table 1** identifies the counties that fall within or are intersected by the General Study Area boundary. The General Study Area includes 11 full counties and portions of 11 additional counties.

Table 1 Counties in the General Study Area

Alameda County	Merced County ¹	San Benito County ¹	Santa Cruz County	Yolo County ¹
Colusa County	Napa County ¹	San Francisco County	Solano County	Yuba County ¹
Contra Costa County	Nevada County ¹	San Joaquin County ¹	Sonoma County ¹	
El Dorado County ¹	Placer County ¹	San Mateo County	Stanislaus County ¹	
Marin County	Sacramento County	Santa Clara County	Sutter County	

Notes:

¹ Only a portion of the county falls within the General Study Area

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America: U.S. County Boundaries, 2005; ATAC Corporation, August 2012.

Prepared by: ATAC Corporation, August 2013.

5 Environmental Consequences

The EA will evaluate the potential for the alternatives to result in environmental impacts to relevant resource categories defined in FAA Order 1050.1E. This information will enable the reader to clearly understand the environmental resources that would be affected by the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.