

11/30/2011

Dear Ms. Groves,

I am writing in regard to your recent article: [Airport Fight in Pivotal Phase](#) which ran in last Saturday's Los Angeles Times. While it is evident that you did your due diligence, there are a few characterizations that have the potential to mislead and divert attention from the larger issues at Santa Monica Municipal Airport. I will address two of them.

One is the misleading image of "meandering student pilots". It wasn't clear from the context if that phrase is yours or Bill Rosendahl's, but it is inaccurate and unnecessarily alarming and, as such, does a disservice to the flight schools and their students. The truth is that student pilots are the most regimented and monitored of all pilots. They are not allowed to fly anywhere and anytime at will, but must abide by strict rules of conduct for each of their flights. Each phase of their flight training proceeds on the basis of a demonstrated ability as attested in writing by a certified instructor. Flight training is one of the least hazardous regimes in all of aviation and its safety is proven by the relevant statistics.

A second important clarification concerns the business jet traffic at SMO. You characterized jet aircraft operators using SMO as "convenience-loving Westside jet-setters..." The term "convenience-loving" seems unnecessarily pejorative. If I were to say that you were convenience-loving for using a car to get to your assignments you might justly say that a car is not a convenience, but a necessity for you to be able to do your job. Just so with jet and turbine business aircraft. America's business is done by people who find it necessary, not merely convenient, to use fast, flexible jet aircraft to get their jobs done. Secondly the assertion that these aircraft are operated predominantly by "Westside jet-setters" is in error. In fact, few of the jet aircraft that use SMO are based there, but rather come from all over the country and all over the globe, a fact which elucidates the central issue in this conflict. Santa Monica Airport is not a local asset in conflict with other local land use issues. It is part and parcel of a national and global network whose importance goes far beyond the borders of the adjacent communities. This does not imply that health and safety issues are moot-far from it, but seen in a larger context, it means that these issues must be a work in progress and not causes celebres for closing the airport.

I posit that many of the folks that would see the airport closed anticipate a large public park or other such pastoral (you did describe the land as a "campus") use for the land. In all probability, if the past is any indication, what may follow an airport closure could be something on the order of a Century City West-a gigantic business park with major noise, pollution, and traffic issues of its own. This was apparent to many airport neighbors in 1989 when a referendum on just such a land use scheme was qualified on the Santa Monica ballot. The recent outcry over expansions of Santa Monica College make it reasonable to assume that there may now be even less enthusiasm for this type of land use. A search of your files under Reliance Development Corporation would be

enlightening. Lastly, far from being a tempest in a teapot, SMO is the grand prize in a high-stakes real estate game and, irrespective of the advice given to little Dorothy so long ago, it would behoove us to pay close attention to those developers behind the curtain.

Regards, Bill Worden