

NBAA Requests Appeals Court Review of Santa Monica Airport Settlement Agreement

Washington, DC, Feb. 13, 2017 - The National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) today joined with five additional airport stakeholders to petition the U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit, asking the court to review the recent decision by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that negatively affects the future of California's Santa Monica Municipal Airport (SMO).

Last month, the FAA announced it had reached a settlement with the city of Santa Monica, which, in addition to permitting closure of the historic airfield at the end of 2028, would also allow the city to immediately begin the process of reducing the length of the SMO's sole runway from 4,973 feet to 3,500 feet.

NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen termed the FAA's seeming acquiescence to a vocal minority of Santa Monica residents, "a one-of-a-kind development" that would severely restrict aviation access throughout Southern California and across the U.S.

"Santa Monica's airport is a vital asset to the national aviation system, both locally as well as nationally, and serves as a critical transportation lifeline for the entire Los Angeles basin," Bolen added. "NBAA remains committed to aggressively supporting unrestricted business aviation access to SMO, through this petition and other available channels."

City officials have repeatedly attempted to curtail access by aviation users and other stakeholders to the airport, in defiance of established historical precedents dating back to the original 1948 instrument of transfer agreement that returned control of the former military airfield back to the city, as well as the city's federal grant obligations.

In addition to today's filing, NBAA and other stakeholders continue to review all additional options in response to the settlement agreement, including continued pursuit of several ongoing administrative complaints – not covered under the settlement – by NBAA and others over the city's federally mandated obligations.

This includes a Part 16 complaint, filed by NBAA and other airport proponents, alleging that the city has mishandled airport finances, landing fees and other terms, in part through continued failure to offer leases to longstanding aviation-related businesses on the field.

Other parties to the petition include the Santa Monica Airport Association, a longstanding proponent for maintaining the airport's current presence; two airport businesses – Bill's Air Center, Inc. and Kim Davidson Aviation, Inc. – that would be directly impacted by restricted access to, and eventual closure of, SMO; and two operators based at the airport, Redgate Partners, LLC; and Wonderful Citrus, LLC.