

Dear Rachel Uranga,

Your recent article that centered upon Whiteman Airport, the county, and the surrounding community in many ways was verifiably better than the majority of the coverage I've seen. It indeed was more balanced.

Some observations follow that could in the future be addressed:

No one should have to witness injury and harm, and one can only sympathize with those who do. But the arguments that focus upon the assumption that the airport is too close to houses and buildings are suspect. Similar circumstances were voiced by a community activist recently during a Van Nuys Airport protest.

Fact: the airport was founded on a farm per your article in 1946. How many of those houses and current residents followed knowing fully that they were building and/or subsequently living near an airport? Maybe all of them!

The Van Nuys activist referred to our (her) neighborhood, but I suspect that the airport was there first and that she moved into the Van Nuys Airport neighborhood. Some deeds of ownership probably mention that as well.

Btw, closing airports, or limiting their operations has downstream effects. Closing Santa Monica Airport to jets results in Van Nuys getting more resident jets. Closing Santa Monica Airport ironically will result in more noise not less. Why? SMO has tower-controlled airspace up to 2500 feet around the airport. A closed airport will void that protected airspace allowing more flights at lower altitudes resulting in most probably more noise.

With regard to Van Nuys, perhaps a little-known fact is that VNY is an airport of entry (AOE). The only other local airport with a customs facility is LAX. Close Van Nuys airport and create major airspace gridlock and delay at LAX affecting thousands of passengers daily.

At 68 years old adult Eva Avalos made an informed choice to move into a home 50 yards from the runway. Clearly, she acted in a manner that she thought benefited her. Possibly the lower rental fees associated with properties near runways were a factor. Now, she is an advocate for the risk she accepted to be erased, even if doing so disadvantages others. Does she not suspect that if the airport was closed, and say a park was built in its place, her rent, and that of others, would immediately increase? She and others would be forced to move. Then I suspect that they then could form a group and protest the higher rents and area gentrification.

It is ironic that the publicized goals framed as helping the low-income Latino community referred to as disadvantaged by "Pacoima Beautiful" will instead of benefiting the present residents, should the airport be closed, will force the residents to leave their homes and vacate the area.

Addressing the many community benefits that the airport provides, free community aviation education programs via the FAA WINGS program and the EAA Young Eagles youth program, a base for area aviation policing activity, a base for LA County Firefighting helicopters, a base for the local Civil Air Patrol search and rescue air force affiliate, as well as the CAP youth program, those employed by the airport system, and the area businesses, at the airport, and those off-property businesses that the airport users

support, plus other benefits, the loss of the airport would result in an economic loss for the area and a services sector loss as well.

The surrounding community is literally afraid for their lives” “There are way too many crashes in and out of Whiteman Airport” - Congressman Cardenas.

332 GA deaths in 2020 were reported, and the future number is said to be declining. Reported was that no one in recent memory on the ground lost their life. Perhaps critics have overlooked the 42,900 plus deaths reported on our highways in 2021, a number over 10% higher than the previous year.

The argument that the airport management should be held responsible for incoming or outgoing traffic that was diligently handled is interesting. In November 2020 the 182 flight mentioned in your article was flying to the airport seeking refuge whilst encountering an engine failure. Is this a serious argument suggesting that it would be safer to not have an airport at all? Does it suggest that the airport should be closed because a pilot tried to land there during an emergency? Should other airports be closed when pilots try to land under emergency circumstances but fail to? Perhaps LAX should be closed because Alaska flight 261 from Mexico to San Francisco and Seattle tried to land at LAX with flight control problems, but crashed within a few flight minutes away from LAX with 88 fatalities off the Ventura coast?

In my opinion, not only were the current nearby residents not afraid for their lives when they moved nearby Whiteman, but business owners in the area were not afraid for their welfare either when they moved close to the airport. Church’s Chicken, Subway, 7/11, and Vallarta Supermarket are examples that relatively speaking recently established, and/or remodeled their business within short walking distance of the Whiteman runway. Then, there is the newly established bike path that parallels San Fernando Road. Was it built for users afraid for their lives?

With regard to leaded fuel, everyone recognizes that a practical solution for unleaded fuel would be better. And unleaded fuel is nearing probability! While true, cars do run on unleaded fuel, other dangers exist with those same cars:

“Working near exhaust (car) fumes exposes you to poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) gas, which is present in large amounts in vehicle exhaust fumes. Overexposure to this odorless and colorless gas can cause death. Even mild exposure to CO can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue.”
Fumeavent.com

Perhaps Pacoima Beautiful and the congressman should argue for a 30-day closure of San Fernando Road for a safety audit?

Yet, in spite of highway death danger, area cars are advocated for because they are a “necessity to get to schools, to work, to everyday life.” However, “Driving an airplane above disadvantaged communities is a luxury,” said Veronica Padilla-Campos, executive director of Pacoima Beautiful...” Apparently, residents of Pacoima don’t drive to Disneyland, Magic Mountain, or parks where children play.

Other dangers exist as well. Neighborhood children are referred to. Many children drink milk. Milk comes from cows. However: “The world’s one billion+ cows are responsible for about 40% of global *methane* emissions - a significant contributor to global warming.” – edf.org

Perhaps armed with this knowledge, neighborhood activists could fight for restricted milk sales in order to protect residents' health?

Santa Monica Airport is referred to as a support source for the anti-airport argument. This quote from the Santa Monica Daily Press might be assumed by some to say it all:

“SMO — As city officials begin to look toward the possibilities of a post-2015 Santa Monica Airport, the commission that is meant to advise them on all things aviation received its fifth member, who has a history of involvement with an anti-airport neighborhood group and, like his four colleagues, has no background in aviation. David Goddard, a real estate executive and the lone council nominee, received unanimous support from the council to fill a vacant seat on the commission with a term ending June 30.”

Why is the above real estate reference important?

One reason for concern is that airports bring with them certain safety measures that restrict multistory real estate development within the approach and departure paths.

I believe that there is a case that can be made regarding the intentions of anti-airport leaders, and that they may be different than the public might determine from reading most articles. Within the WHP context, that seems to capitalize on the “disadvantaged” low-income residents and their plight.

True enough, the anti-airport arguments vary a bit depending upon the airport being addressed. Disadvantaged and low-income residents don't play too well as reasons in Santa Monica, but noise does.

At Van Nuys it's toxic jet fuel, which you already identified as unleaded, and currently, SAF is emerging. Furthermore, the new class of business jets operates very quietly, and flight tracks are now being designed for noise sensitivity.

The bottom line, however, is always the same, to find the villain, follow the money.

Sent with the best of regards, hoping that with your talent and demonstrated balanced reporting, you might find the above useful reading,

Ron Berinstein CFII

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