



NO. 14
12-21-04

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

104-02



MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 21, 2004
TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: ADMINISTRATION
SUBJECT: COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTING A FORMAL
POSITION ON THE EL TORO AIRPORT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this agenda item is to determine whether the City Council wishes to adopt a formal position with regard to El Toro Airport and, in particular, the proposal set forth in the December 7, 2004, letter from former Mayor Mike Clesceri to Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta.

RECOMMENDATION

Pleasure of the Council.

PROPOSED COSTS

Unknown.

DISCUSSION

On December 6, 2004, a letter from former Mayor Clesceri (dated December 7) was sent via FAX to Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, requesting the initiation of a dialogue about the possibility of the City of Fullerton's Airport being the lead agent in acquiring the rights to El Toro Marine Corps Air Station for the purpose of operating a joint use military/civilian international airport facility.

Though the City Council has in the past supported the concept of retaining El Toro as an airport for commercial aviation and cargo purposes, no ratification of this position has occurred since the county-wide vote to preclude an airport use and the decision by the Department of the Navy to sell the site to the highest bidder at auction.

Attached is the December 7, 2004, letter from former Mayor Clesceri to Secretary Mineta relating the City's proposal. As of December 14, there has been no response to this letter from the Department of Transportation.


Chris Meyer
City Manager

CM:dja
Attachment



CITY OF FULLERTON

CITY COUNCIL

Office of the Mayor and City Council

December 7, 2004

Mayor, Mike Clesceri
Mayor Pro Tem, Shawn Nelson
Don Bankhead
F. Richard Jones, M.D.
Leland Wilson

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
400 7th St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Mineta:

As Mayor, I am writing to ask the Department of Transportation's assistance in converting the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station from a military airfield owned by the Department of the Navy to a commercial airport owned by the D.O.T. but operated by our City pursuant to a long-term lease. This letter presents our initial proposal as to how the D.O.T. and Fullerton, which has the only general aviation municipal airport in Orange County, can work together to accomplish this goal, and offers reasons which support transforming El Toro into a commercial airport.

In a region with a tremendous and growing need for airport capacity to accommodate passengers and cargo, the D.O.T. and Fullerton, working together, have an unrivaled opportunity to serve the public interest by converting El Toro into a commercial airport. Reconfigured for commercial use, El Toro could, within 15 years, become second in size only to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in Southern California – a region that encompasses 20 million people, 82 million airline passengers and 3 million tons of air cargo annually. In fact, the 2004 Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan "Preferred Aviation Plan" without El Toro clearly states that our region currently lacks the airport capacity to meet unconstrained air passenger demand. The consequence to the region of this inability to meet unconstrained demand, SCAG said, is an economic cost of \$14 billion and a loss of 98,000 jobs per year.

Availability of El Toro as a commercial airport would provide a tremendous service to millions of air passengers in the region, across the nation and internationally who travel to and from Southern California. In fact, we are unaware of any circumstance, either presently or in the past, when such a large air transportation infrastructure asset was available for commercial redevelopment in a region where such a substantial and well-recognized need existed. Finally, in the D.O.T.'s recently released 2004 OEP report, Southern California is expected to face major shortages in capacity beyond 2020 especially in Orange County and Long Beach. With the current restrictions for expansion, the region will be severely underserved.

Specifically, I am requesting that the D.O.T., with Fullerton's support and assistance, consider the following:

1. Petitioning the Navy under its regulations with a late request to issue a Supplemental Record of Decision withdrawing its prior determination and, instead, convey, at no cost, the surplus property at El Toro to the D.O.T. for the purposes of civil aviation development.

Fullerton: 100 Years of Community Pride

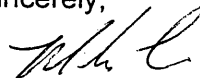
2. Seeking from the D.O.T. advice on requesting Congressional approval on legislation modeled after the Metropolitan Washington Airports Act, authorizing the D.O.T. to own the El Toro property and lease it to an operating authority, namely the City of Fullerton.
3. Discuss the possibility of the City of Fullerton entering into a long-term lease for the operation of a commercial airport modeled after the FAA's long-term lease with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to operate Dulles and Reagan national airports.
4. Identify funding opportunities to reconstruct El Toro as a commercial airport.

The City is asking the D.O.T.'s assistance in converting El Toro into a commercial airport not only because the City of Fullerton cannot accomplish this itself, but also because this represents in many ways the most important role representative government can play: namely, to serve the needs of the people by doing what they cannot do for themselves.

The City is well aware the future development of El Toro is a controversial subject, and that we will likely have to overcome legal challenges at the state and federal levels before a new commercial airport at El Toro becomes a reality. In addition, a project of this magnitude cannot go forward without Congress playing a substantial role. We submit this proposal as a first step in working with the D.O.T. to create a new and much-needed major commercial airport in the five-county Southern California area. Be assured we are not wedded to the specifics set forth here; rather, we are flexible and open to dialogue with the D.O.T. on the wide spectrum of issues this project will generate. For example, we are open to sharing the use of El Toro with the Navy for housing needs and for joint air traffic use. Also, we are open to working with other organizations, such as Los Angeles World Airports or a regional airport authority, to operate the commercial airport.

At an historical juncture in which federal, state and local resources are stretched further than they have ever been, this remarkable opportunity should not be lost. The D.O.T. and the city of Fullerton should consider moving forward together on a joint effort to convert El Toro for the purpose it is most ideally suited. It would simply be a tragedy if El Toro - an invaluable aviation asset in Southern California - is converted to parkland rather than to a commercial airport that could eventually carry nearly 30 million passengers annually. Following both the letter and the spirit of the base closure laws, this exceptional Federal property should be dedicated to benefit the citizens of the entire nation, not just one city. We look forward to beginning a dialogue with DOT about this proposal.

Sincerely,



Mike Clesceri
Mayor