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Proposals for Reid-Hillview and San Martin Airports Move Forward with Board of Supervisors Vote

A long-term plan for alternative uses at San Jose’s Reid-Hillview Airport and an investment in upgrading and expanding the San Martin Airport moved forward on Tuesday, December 4, with a vote from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.

The 3-2 vote was the beginning of a long process to determine the futures of both airports, the health and safety of residents in the surrounding areas and the use of federal and local funds. The Reid-Hillview Airport would continue to operate until at least 2031, when federal grants expire, freeing up the 180 acres of land for non-aviation uses.

Presented with several options for the future of the two airports, the Board directed staff to focus on an option first proposed by Supervisor Dave Cortese that focused on improving and expanding the San Martin Airport while negotiating leases at Reid-Hillview Airport to make land available for future non-aviation uses.

“The potential revenue for the County in considering alternative uses for Reid-Hillview is too significant to ignore,” said Supervisor Dave Cortese. “But with this option, operations can continue at Reid-Hillview as we look at ways to improve the San Martin Airport.”

Supervisor Cortese’s option, which at the meeting was amended and moved by Supervisor Cindy Chavez, directs staff to:

- Approve a policy statement that the County will not apply for Airport Improvement Program grants for Reid-Hillview Airport and will make

improvements funded by the General Fund that are required to operate Reid-Hillview safely.

- Direct the County Executive to accept \$1 million in FAA entitlement funding related to the airfield repaving project at San Martin Airport to help pay down the outstanding General Fund loan.
- Direct the County Executive to apply for property releases at Reid-Hillview Airport from the FAA consistent with the Business Plan Update.
- Invite the City of San Jose to engage within the next two years in joint planning for both Reid-Hillview and the Eastridge areas, including alternative uses of Reid-Hillview after 2031.
- Begin a transparent community engagement process, that considers consolidation of aviation operations and the 2006 master plan for the San Martin Airport, which was referred to the Board by the Housing, Land Use, Environment and Transportation Committee chaired by Supervisor Cortese, with Supervisor Mike Wasserman as the vice chair.
- Develop a plan to implement improvements to ensure adequate traffic flow and safety on East San Martin Avenue and Highway 101 and adjacent roadways.
- Establish a plan to implement the improvements at the San Martin Airport, including funding from the General Fund and FAA funds.
- Direct the County Executive to report back to the Board with a recommended plan to analyze and address any concerns regarding airborne lead and other health concerns.
- Direct staff to reach out to San Jose State University to negotiate a possible accommodation for the university's aviation program at the San Martin Airport.
- Direct staff to reach out to the County's Office of Emergency Services to consider all safety options.

- In partnership with the aviation community, look at the use of only unleaded fuel at the airports.

General aviation trends show piston-propeller aircraft use to be on the decline in general, and at Reid-Hillview, in particular. In 2006, Reid-Hillview housed 687 aircraft, compared to 478 today. In that same period, aircraft at the San Martin Airport has grown from 115 to 150.

In 2006, the Board approved a master plan for the San Martin Airport that outlines the necessary improvements and expansion to consolidate general aviation operations there. This plan may need to be modified if operations shift from Reid-Hillview to San Martin.

With approval from the Federal Aviation Administration, the Board could re-direct future federal investments to improve Reid-Hillview to improve and expand the San Martin Airport.

“I don’t think it’s wise to accept another federal grant to improve Reid-Hillview and tie up the land for aviation use only in perpetuity,” Cortese said. “This option gives us time to work with the aviation community, neighbors and business owners and the City of San Jose to determine the best use of the land occupied by Reid-Hillview and the area surrounding the San Martin Airport.”

For more information, call the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese at 408-299-5030. To watch the debate, click [here](#) and scroll to Item 19. To read reports about the airport business plans, click [here](#).