

City of Huntington Beach Jet Noise Commission

Monthly Summary Report July 2020



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Overview

The purpose of this Jet Noise Commission monthly summary report is to provide a continuous update on commercial jet traffic over the City of Huntington Beach. This report offers a high level summary and does not contain all of the underlying data that contributed to this report.

To obtain more detailed information, a corresponding document entitled “JNC Detailed Report - July, 2020” is available on the City’s website and includes in-depth flight path analysis, air traffic frequency, duration analysis, and other relevant information.

This report covers the period of July 1 to July 31, 2020.

Noise

Noise can be measured. However, the irritation caused by this noise is relative to each individual. One person hearing a plane at 7,000 feet might hardly notice it while another person might find it quite distracting.

Factors that affect noise level include the altitude of the plane, its speed, its type, and the frequency of planes overhead. The focus of this monthly summary report is to account for the number of planes overhead and their altitudes.

A greater frequency of planes at lower altitudes will generate more noise than those at higher altitudes. In addition, people living in an area of Huntington Beach, where only a few planes per day may fly overhead will experience far fewer noise impacts than those living under the condensed and collapsed flight paths established by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) “NextGen” program. This program was implemented in 2017, and the City believes this has resulted in significantly more flight noise throughout the day.

These impacts have continued up until the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly reduced air travel and given our residents temporary respite from air traffic noise. However, the Jet Noise Commission believes air traffic and noise will eventually pick up again to pre-COVID-19 levels, which must be mitigated.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Air Traffic

When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March 2020, it created a tremendous impact on air travel. At Long Beach airport (LGB), for example, plane arrivals decreased by approximately 80 percent, compared to the prior year (see Figure 1). In addition, Figure 2 illustrates much of the same, showing a significant decline in the number of passengers.

However, as the State implemented stricter COVID-19 safety measures and is flattening the curve, more passengers and planes are beginning to travel again, as noted in the July figures below.

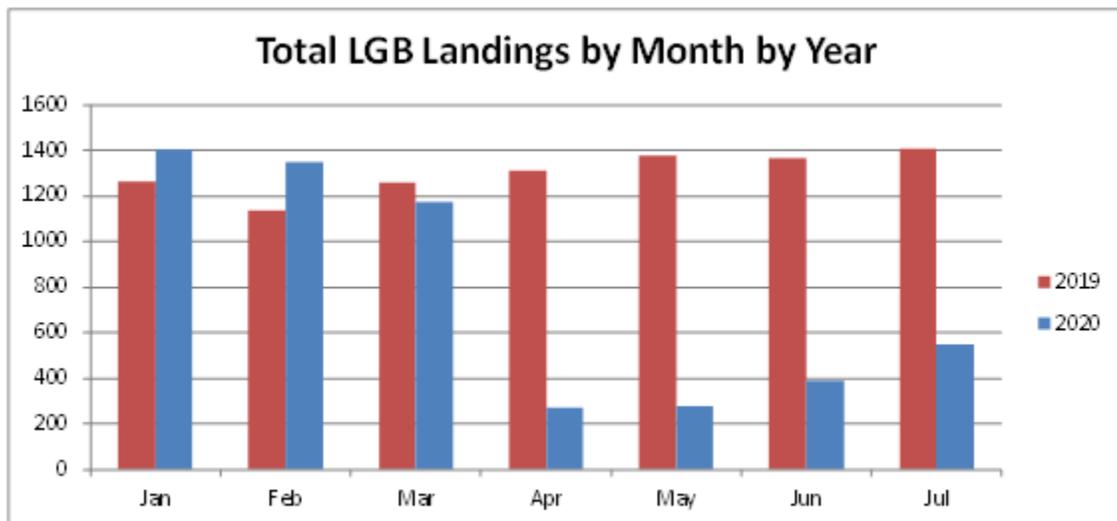


Figure 1 - LGB Landings (Jan - Jul 2020 vs 2019)

Upcoming Air Traffic Changes

COVID-19 has also brought certain airlines to a halt. Due to the strict quarantine rules in Hawaii, Hawaiian Air has not landed at LBG since April 2020. FedEx has also not landed since May. It is unknown when these airlines will return to their “normal” routes, but when they do, we anticipate an increase in jet noise and complaints.

In addition, Jet Blue announced in July 2020 that their last day of operation at LGB will be on October 6, 2020. According to LGB Director, Cynthia Guidry, JetBlue currently holds 17 flight slots and performs 51% of all landings at LGB (see Figure 3). Ms. Guidry expects “strong interest in the slots as they become available.” Southwest Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines and Delta Air Lines are currently on the airport’s wait list for any available flight slots at LGB.

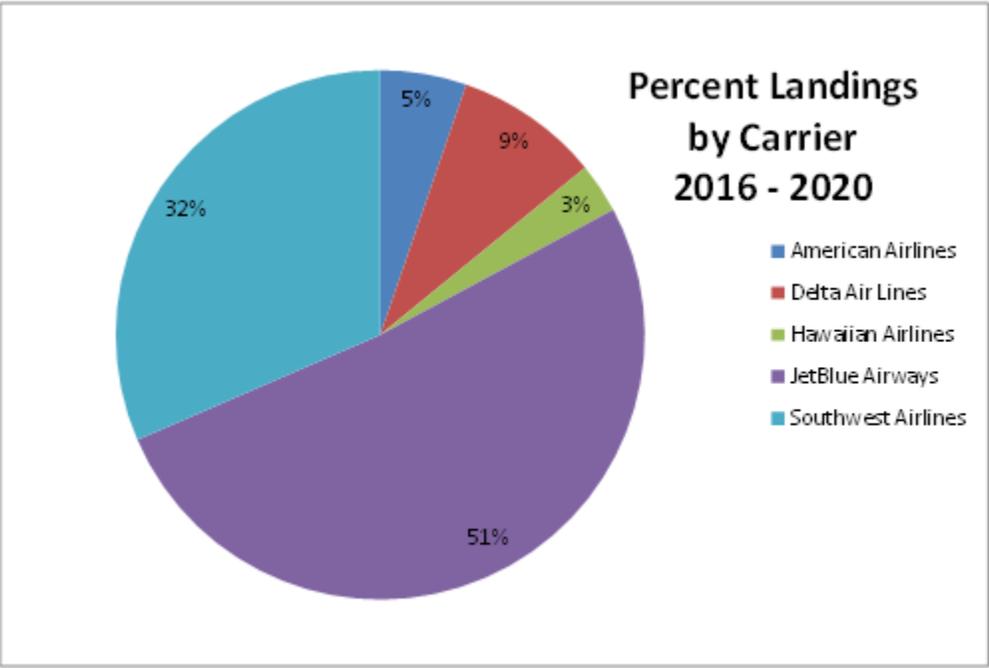


Figure 2 - LGB Landing Percentage by Carrier

Currently, different airlines fly different airplane models and may have different approach procedures. As a result, it is currently not possible to calculate the plane counts and their resultant noise over Huntington Beach.

Air Traffic over Huntington Beach

Huntington Beach is nestled between three airports – Long Beach (LGB), Los Angeles (LAX), and John Wayne (Orange County/Santa Ana) (SNA) – and their flight paths, both arrivals and departures, traverse the City. We also experience air traffic from planes that are simply overhead and not affiliated with the three local airports. As a result, there are 7 different flight paths across the city at different places and altitudes. Some of those paths are within close proximity at certain points, and residents beneath those points may experience significant air traffic noise throughout the day.

Figure 4 through Figure 6 are representative data collected over the last 2 weeks in July 2020. While the frequency of planes is reduced due to COVID-19, the flight paths do not display much variance in comparison to data from 2017.

The average altitude for each of the 7 flight paths is different as indicated in Figure 4. Both LGB and SNA arrivals maintain the lowest average altitudes over the City, and theoretically, generate more noise. However, both frequency of planes and their duration in the air also influence noise levels.

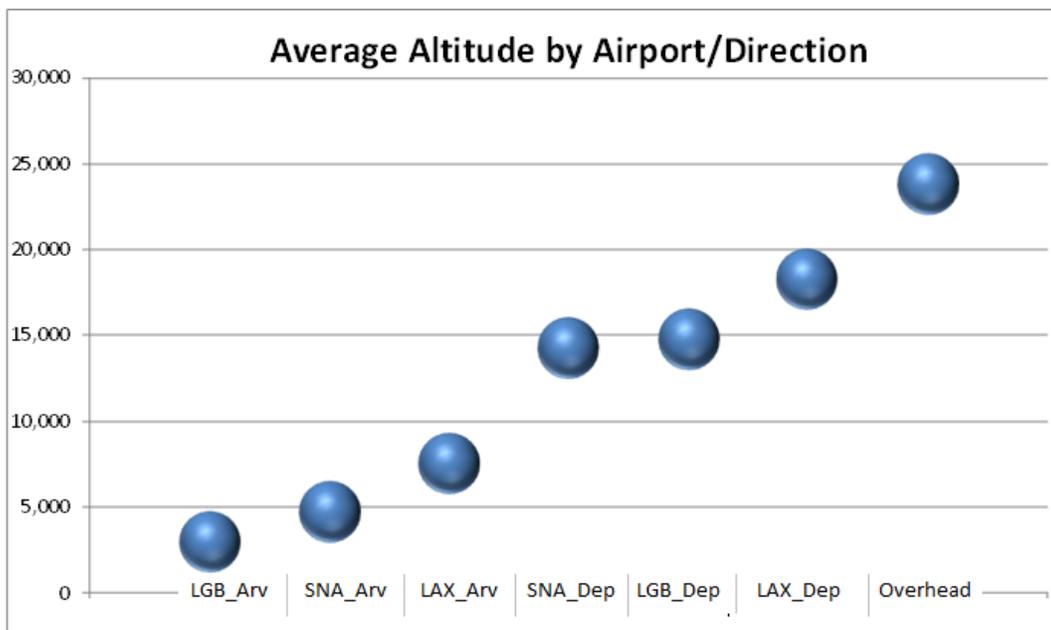


Figure 3 - Average Altitudes over HB by Airport/Direction

Figure 5 displays the percentage of planes over Huntington Beach, by the airport they are arriving at or departing from. LAX departures account for the majority at 43%.

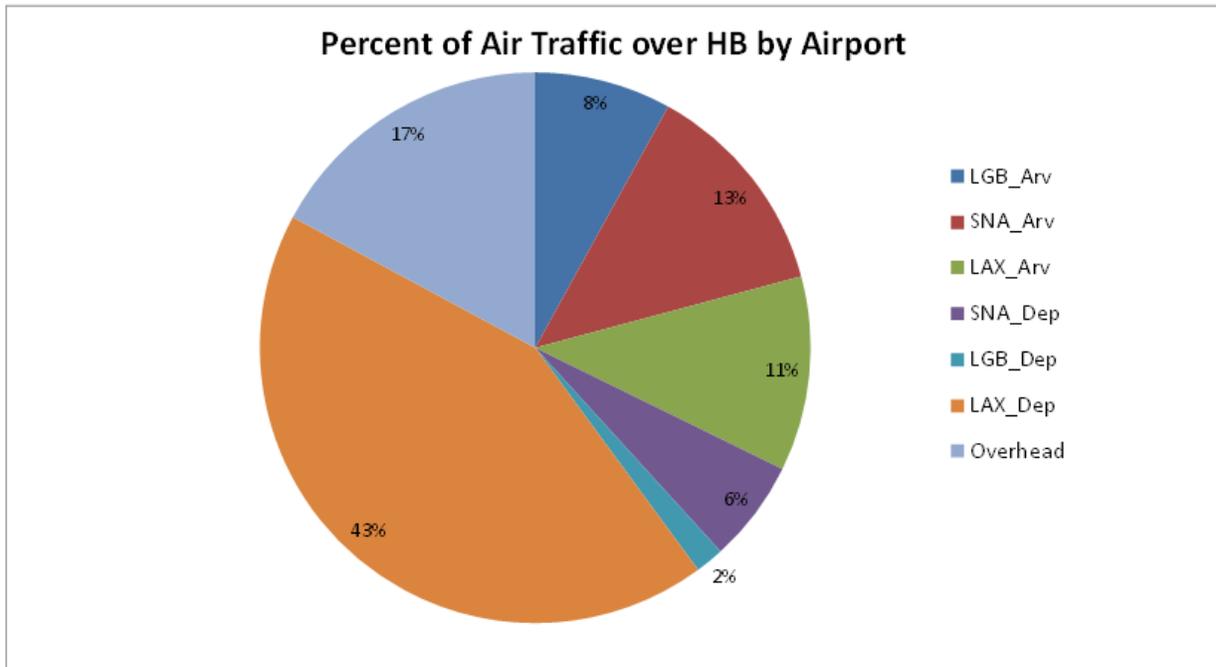


Figure 4 - Percent of Air Traffic by Airport/Direction

As previously mentioned, the length of time that a plane requires to transit our city also affects noise. Per Figure 6, average times vary from 20 seconds to over 2 minutes. Arrivals typically take longer due to their reduced speeds, whereas departures must gain altitude quickly and are accelerating to near cruising speed. Overhead flights often require long transit times as well, but their altitudes are typically at 25,000 feet, which reduces noise impacts.

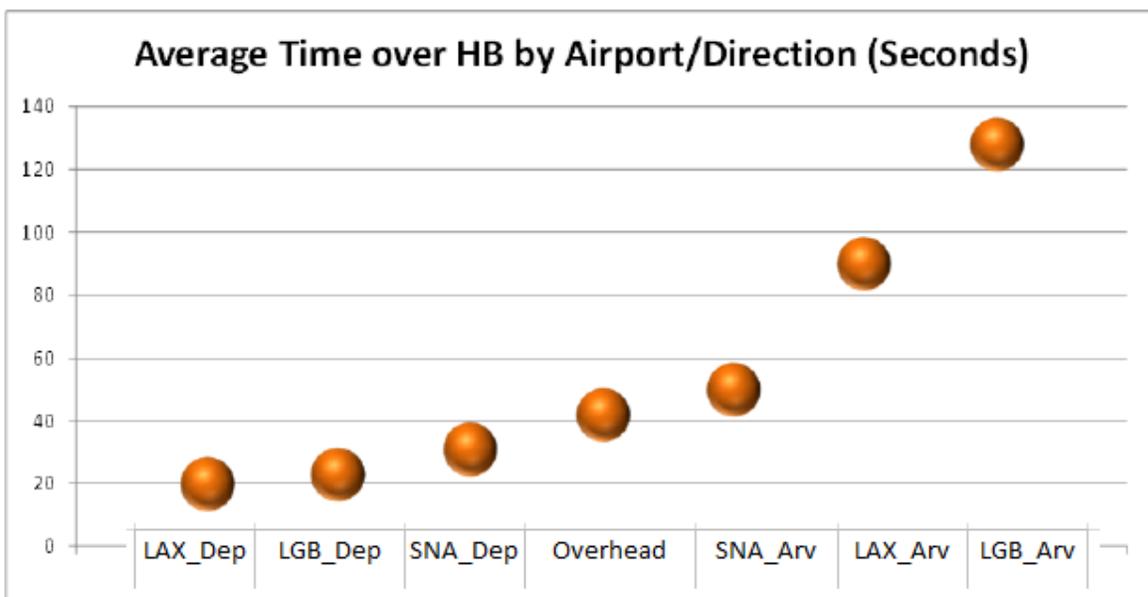


Figure 5 - Average Time over HB by Airport/Direction

Huntington Beach is divided into a series of Residential Districts (RDs). Each RD is ½ mile square bounded on major streets as seen in Figure 7. By plotting all the flight paths and tabulating the number of places that traverse over each RD, a “heat map” can be created as seen in Figure 8. The bigger the circle and the closer to the color red in each RD, the more planes that are traversing. There are several RDs that exemplify the concentrated flight path effects on the residents.

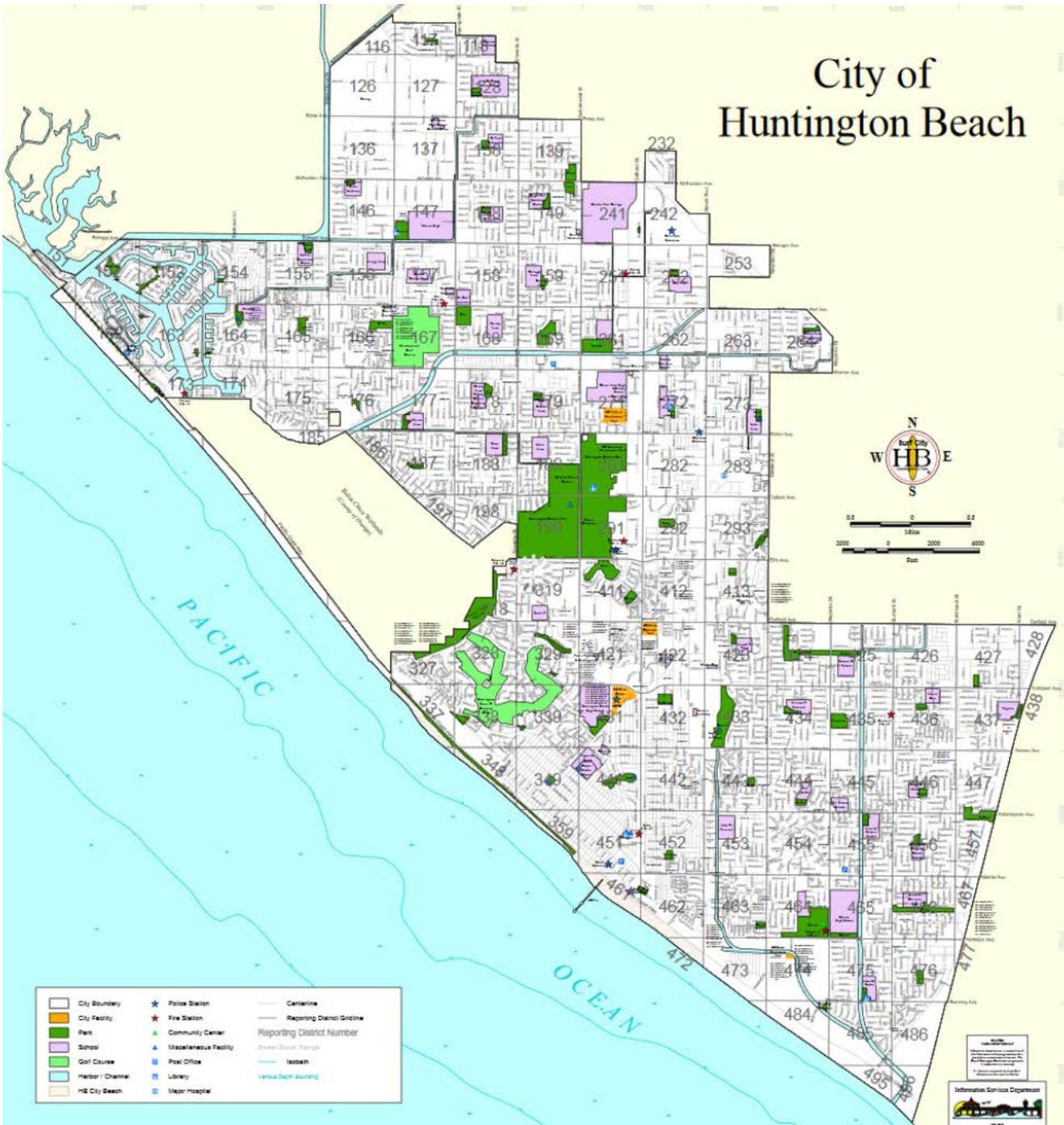


Figure 6 - HB RD Map

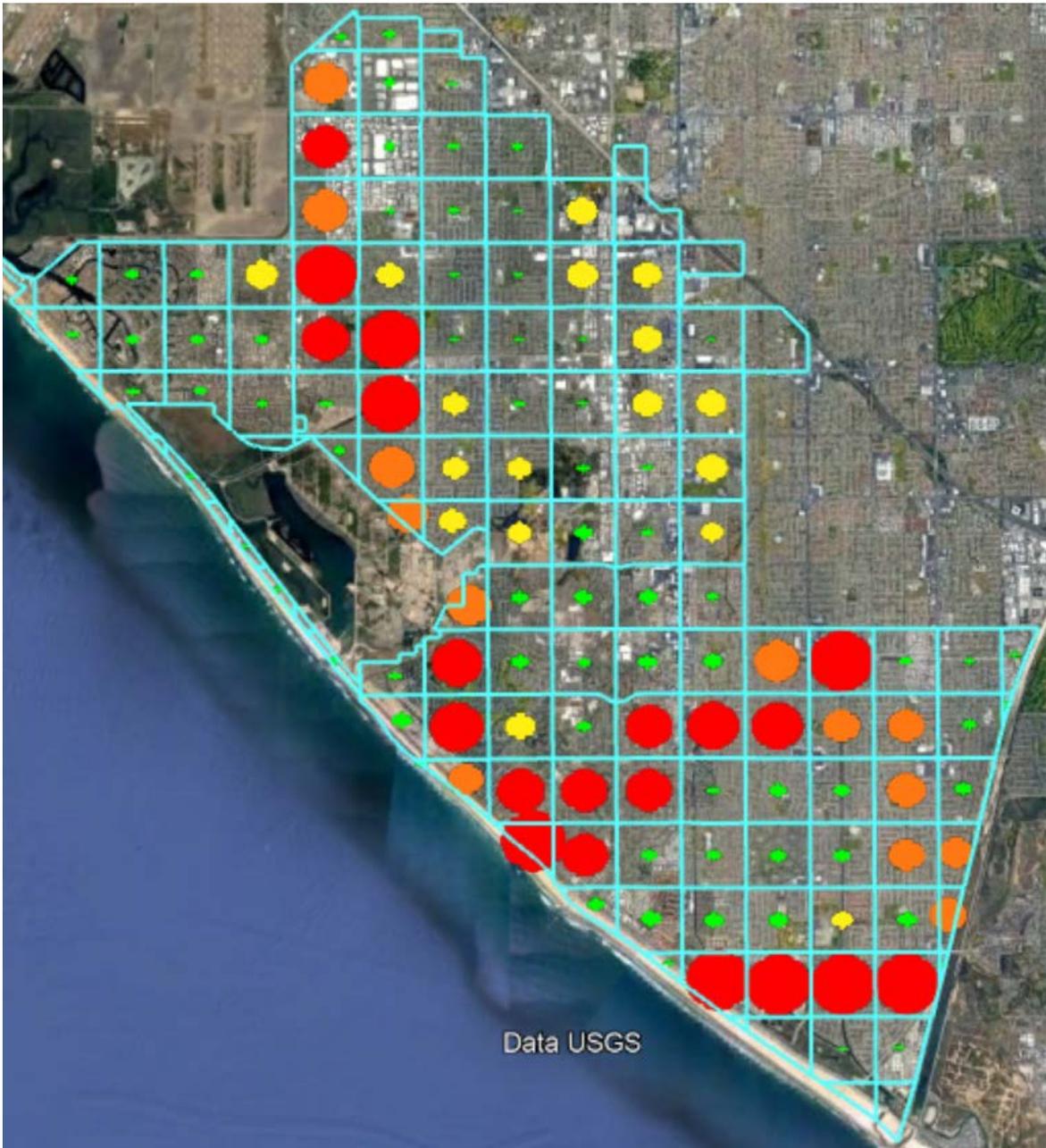


Figure 7 - Heat Map by RD based on Plane Count

Legislative/Legal Activities

There have been no new developments in any of the existing congressional bills that have been submitted and assigned to the transportation committee. There are likewise no updates on existing lawsuits against the FAA and no significant new filings related to NextGen. The FAA has submitted their EA for the Miami airport and groups there are looking at options, because the story is the same there. In spite of a big ocean to the east of the runway, NextGen plans show condensing flight paths like in many other places.

Congressman Harley Rouda has formed an Orange County Jet Noise Task Force that is primarily focused on SNA departure flights at this time. The current focus is establishing a higher/faster Noise Abatement Departure Procedure-1 (NADP-1) in Figure 9 as the preferred departure profile.

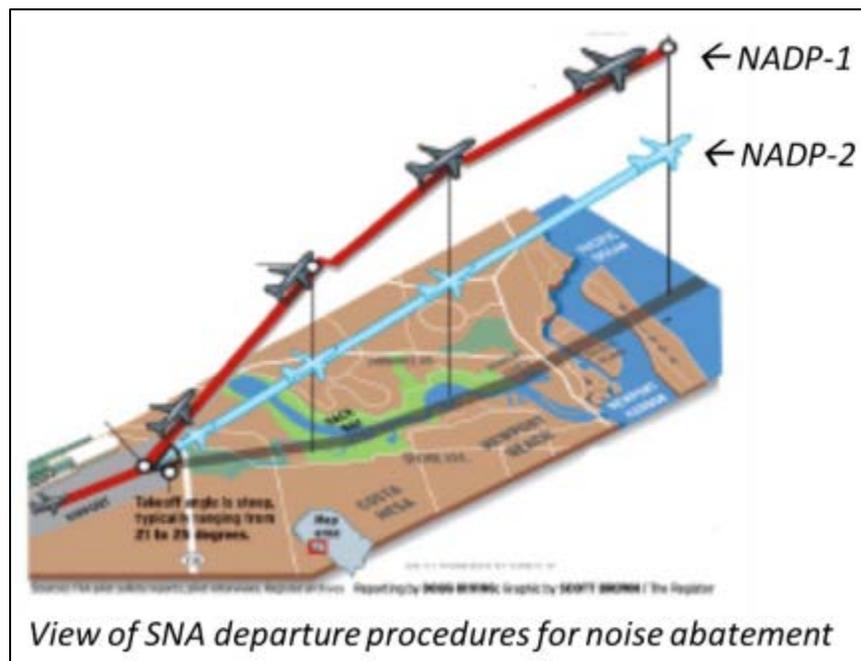


Figure 8 - SNA NADP-1 vs. NADP-2

Questions

For questions related to the Jet Noise Commission or this report, please contact Staff Liaison, Catherine Jun, at catherine.jun@surfcity-hb.org or (714) 536-5579.