



COUNTY OF ORANGE  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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June 6, 2003

Secretary Norman Mineta  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

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#SIA

Dear Secretary Mineta:

On Friday, June 6, 2003, the Los Angeles Times published a disturbing story about the former MCAS El Toro. The article disclosed the contents of a letter in which the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) ask the Department of Transportation (DOT) to take over the base property and allow LAWA to operate an airport there through a long-term lease. The Orange County Board of Supervisors is outraged at this suggestion which blatantly ignores the decision of the citizens of Orange County who passed Measure W more than a year ago designating El Toro for park and other public benefit uses. The Orange County Board of Supervisors will not tolerate any attempt by the City of Los Angeles to overturn a local land use decision made by the voters of Orange County and endorsed by its political leadership.

The firm decision by Orange County to dedicate the El Toro property to non-aviation use was the culmination of more than nine (9) years of public discourse and expenditure of millions of dollars of taxpayers moneys for the reuse planning process. The City of Los Angeles has absolutely no authority to dictate land use development in our county and is clearly out of line in its attempt to interfere with our local land use issues. Our county's decision is now fully endorsed by the Department of Navy (DoN) and plans are well under way to auction El Toro to private interests for the development of the Orange County Great Park.

The claims made in the City's letter relative to loss of a regional asset are entirely baseless. The DoN has deliberately made a decision to sell the land and use the proceeds for the cleanup of the base property which otherwise could cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. For more than a year, federal and local agencies have been successfully cooperating to turn El Toro into a win-win proposition for all parties. The City of Irvine and the DoN are actively implementing the local and federal decisions and are on schedule to complete the sale of the El Toro property within the next few months.

The City of Los Angeles's claims that El Toro is needed to address the regional aviation demand has already been solidly debunked within our region. Southern California is blessed by more runways than anywhere else in the world. Orange County with its 3 million population does have an airport with a capacity to handle about 11 million annual passengers. Ontario

International Airport located in close proximity to Orange County has a capacity of about 10 million annual passengers and is allocated about 30 million annual passengers in the Regional Transportation Plan. Long Beach Airport, located within just 15 miles from northwest Orange County has another 3 million annual passenger capacity. Other Inland Empire airports including March GlobalPort, San Bernardino International Airport, Southern California Logistics Airport and Palm Springs International have been aggressively pursuing plans to build and expand their operations and have asked for our region's support to allow them to absorb the future aviation demand. In addition, LAWA has been actively planning for an airport at Palmdale where the City of Los Angeles owns over 17,000 acres of land.

The City of Los Angeles's arguments about fair share distribution of aviation capacity has also been rejected repeatedly in all reputable aviation planning circles. The suggestion that each county should provide its so-called "fair share" of aviation capacity violates the fundamental principles of regional aviation planning. Allocation of airport capacity for passengers and cargo based on political boundaries in a region with the economic sophistication and diversity of Southern California demonstrates the short-sighted nature of the proposition. Nowhere in our national aviation system is the location of airports determined based upon county boundary lines. Aviation system planning should be based on a wide variety of considerations including the role and significance of existing airports, their potential to capture domestic and international markets and a host of topographic, environmental, airspace and safety factors. Several attempts to override these important principles of airport planning have been made by special interest groups in the past and have all been solidly rejected by our regional decision makers.

The Southern California Association of Governments, following the passage of Measure W, made a decision to delete all references to an El Toro airport in the Regional Transportation Plan and is now in the process of formulating a regional aviation plan based on the ample aviation resources within our region. Los Angeles county is well represented in SCAG and its many committees and task forces, and this unilateral attempt by the Mayor's office is clearly a backdoor strategy representing special interests which flies in the face of a democratic and inclusive regional planning process.

In summary, let us state that the Orange County Board of Supervisors will not stand for any attempt by an outside jurisdiction to dictate local land use decisions in our communities. Orange County's decision is firm and final - El Toro will be transferred to private ownership and developed according to the wishes of our citizens for non-aviation uses. We urge the DOT to reject any suggestions by the City of Los Angeles or any other entities to overturn our citizens' solid resolve to make El Toro a true countywide asset for the benefit of all of Orange County for now and for our future generations. Furthermore, we encourage you to make a public statement that El Toro is not in your Department's plans for this country's aviation future.

Sincerely,

THOMAS W. WILSON  
Chairman