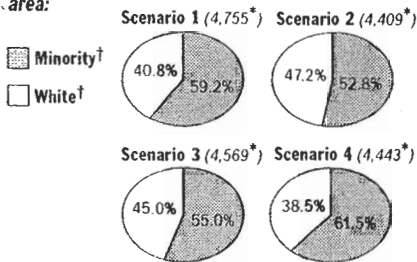


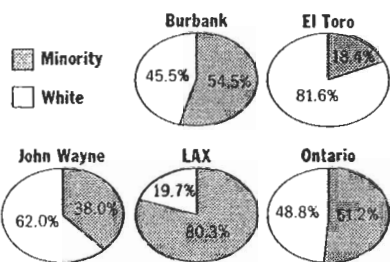
Under the Flight Path

A new study conducted by Communities for a Better Environment, an environmental-justice advocacy group, indicates that there are significant differences in the region's proposed aviation expansion plans and how they impact minority communities. An earlier study conducted by the Southern California Association of Governments had reported that the plans would have a similar impact on minority communities.

Effects on white and minority neighborhoods of expanding airport operations in the Los Angeles area:



Ethnic composition of neighborhoods near area airports:



Southern California Association of Governments projects aviation in the region to grow 154 and 157 million annual passengers in 2020. Here are the various projections being studied:

- Scenario 1** = LAX at 94.2 million annual passengers and El Toro at 22 million
- Scenario 2** = LAX at 70 million annual passengers and El Toro at 28.8 million
- Scenario 3** = LAX at 78 million annual passengers and El Toro at 25.1 million
- Scenario 4** = LAX at 86.4 million annual passengers and El Toro at 0

* Number of daily flights † Percentage of flights over neighborhoods
Sources: Communities for a Better Environment; Southern California Association of Governments

LAX Must Answer Questions About Minority Communities

By SHIRLEY LEUNG
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

LOS ANGELES—Airport expansion in the Los Angeles area faces a new obstacle: "environmental justice."

The issue has emerged in recent months as a critical problem facing regional officials planning the expansion of Los Angeles International Airport. According to a six-year-old federal executive order, airports seeking funding for expansion from the Federal Aviation Administration must consider the health and environmental effects of the expansion on nearby communities—and ensure that expansion doesn't unduly harm minority areas. Failure to do so could result in the loss of federal funding or lawsuits by airport opponents.

Although the order is years old, LAX officials didn't devote much attention to it until this summer. They considered the order's wording vague, and on top of that they believed they didn't yet have enough data to measure the impact of expansion on minority areas.

But, last fall, environmental groups and anti-expansion associations began

writing letters to airport officials raising serious concerns about expansion on environmental-justice grounds. Then, earlier this year, Boston's Logan International Airport came under federal scrutiny for failing to adequately consider the environmental-justice effects in its plan to add a runway.

Now LAX is taking a closer look at the issue. The airport has convened a task force to consider environmental-justice concerns surrounding the expansion. The panel, which began meeting this summer, includes environmental attorneys, airport staff and hired consultants who are experts on environmental justice and demographics. Officials have devoted 50 pages of their 2,000-page draft master plan, which is to be released in the next few weeks, to the issue.

"Environmental justice is an evolving and relatively new area of examination," says Jim Ritchie, deputy executive director for long-range planning at Los Angeles World Airports, which oversees Los Angeles International. "We're taking it very seriously."

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CAI

LAX Faces Questions on Minority Areas

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But the airport clearly has its work cut out: A new study to be released this month by Communities for a Better Environment, a Huntington Park environmental-justice advocacy group, found that regional aviation planners may be underestimating the effects of airport expansion on minority communities.

"This is an emerging issue nationwide, and LAX may be ground zero," says Steve Erie, director of the Urban Studies and Planning Program at University of California, San Diego, who is writing a book on the region's infrastructure projects, including the LAX master plan. "This will be a cutting-edge project in terms of environmental justice."

Airport officials, Los Angeles Mayor Richard J. Riordan and local business groups want to see an expanded Los Angeles International. The airport staff is recommending that the airport grow to 89 million passengers a year by 2015, a 39% increase from today. Supporters want to reconfigure existing runways or add new ones, build a new terminal, improve roadways leading to and from the airport and extend the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Green Line to the airport. The total project is estimated to cost \$10 billion to \$12 billion.

Surrounding communities are 80% minority, according to the Huntington Park study, and critics say it's unfair that this group will suffer the brunt of the proposed expansion from noise, air pollution and traffic from the expansion. An environmental group and a coalition of cities and counties opposed to the expansion are considering filing lawsuits over environmental-justice concerns if those concerns aren't addressed.

What's more, some opponents of the expansion say that predominantly white communities that block airport expansions in their areas are contributing to the problem because the additional air traffic would be forced to go to the airports that have the greatest effects on minority communities.

These opponents are especially critical of cities in Orange County that oppose the conversion of the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station into a commercial airport. The communities within several miles of El Toro are more than 80% white, according to the Huntington Park study.

"If every region adopted the attitude [that] they would not assume their fair share of regional travel, we simply wouldn't have any airports," says Mike Gordon, Mayor of El Segundo and head of a coalition of nearly 80 cities and counties fighting the expansion of LAX. "We will use whatever potential means to make Orange County responsible for its share."

The advocacy group's study, prepared by Occidental College's Environmental Science and Studies Program, says that the scenario that would have a negative effect

on the largest minority population is one in which Los Angeles International expands as planned and El Toro isn't built. The scenario with the least impact: LAX is capped at 70 million passengers a year—about six million more than currently—and El Toro is opened and accommodates about 29 million passengers a year.

The Occidental study challenges the results of a similar study prepared in March by the Southern California Association of Governments, the region's transportation-

'WE WILL USE WHATEVER

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of airport traffic, says the

mayor of El Segundo

planning agency, that found little difference in the environmental effects on minority communities among four regional aviation scenarios. The SCAG study found only minute differences in the percentage of minority residents that would be affected by each of the four scenarios. Both the SCAG and Occidental studies measured only the effects of noise on neighboring communities, but not traffic and pollution.

The Occidental study authors—Manuel Pastor from the University of California, Santa Cruz and Jim Sadd from Occidental College in Los Angeles—say the SCAG study doesn't take into account the increase of the number of flights that airport expansion would entail.

"It raises an equity issue," says Carlos Porras, Communities for a Better Environment's executive director. "It makes more sense to distribute the economic benefits regionally and distribute the environmental burden regionally."

A spokesman for SCAG says the numbers used in the Occidental study are old figures, which SCAG released in March, and represent only a small portion of the agency's environmental-justice analysis. The association is updating its figures and conducting a more-thorough examination of environmental justice, which it plans to release as part of its own environmental-impact report of its regional transportation plan next month.

As for fairness, LAX officials say that even if El Toro and other airports were developed, they couldn't force airlines to fly there. The reality is, they say, that airlines want to fly out of Los Angeles, and the region can't develop alternative airports if the carriers don't choose to play

along.

Under the executive order, LAX has to demonstrate that expansion won't disproportionately affect minority communities and that it can mitigate—through such measures as hiring programs or sound-proofing nearby homes—any disproportionate harm that is caused. Environmental justice is also of concern to San Francisco International Airport, which is also in the midst of a master plan to reconfigure its runways.

To help it address environmental-justice concerns, LAX in June hired Connie Rice, the former western regional counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Ms. Rice filed a landmark civil-rights suit against the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority for discriminating against poor and minority bus riders by pouring money into rail investments.

The 1996 settlement of the case forced MTA to reduce overcrowding on its buses and expand its bus fleet, among other initiatives. In addition, last week the airport hired Robert Garcia, a former attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, to work with the task force. Mr. Garcia, formerly the director of the Los Angeles City Project office for New York-based Environmental Defense, a nonprofit environmental group, for the past year had been one of the airport's toughest critics in urging aviation planners to examine environmental-equity issues.

Mr. Ritchie says that currently the task force is looking at a dozen categories of how an expanding airport would impact minority communities, including air quality and land use. In terms of mitigation, the draft gives a general overview, such as a job-training program and small-business assistance. Once the draft is released, airport officials will work with local communities to come up with a final plan.

For areas such as Huntington Park, a city of 75,000 that is 98% Hispanic and sits seven miles east of LAX, the pending expansion of the airport looms on residents' minds. A couple of months ago, the City Council passed a resolution opposing expansion.

Ric Loya, a city council member who keeps a noise meter by his side to measure jet noise overhead, says the "sound is really, really miserable." He says the city sits too far away to qualify for airport-sponsored sound proofing in homes. And when jets make a turn, Mr. Loya says the city knows. "Sometimes you can smell [the jet fuel]. It's gross. Smells like everyone on the block is having a barbecue."

Mr. Loya says there's always talk of mitigating impacts, but he says he doesn't think it will help. "When you take all the pollutants in the air now, and when you add the planes, life can be kind of lousy," he says. "To say we're going to increase considerably LAX, that means more sound, more pollutants."