

June 20, 2006

To: City of Long Beach  
Mayor Beverly O'Neill  
City Council  
333 W. Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Re: The Long Beach Airport Terminal Improvement Project  
Environmental Impact Report No. 37-03

Dear Mayor O'Neill and Members of the City Council:

Please accept this statement on behalf of the City of Long Beach Long Beach Economic Development Commission in support of the Long Beach Airport Terminal Improvement Project Environmental Impact Report No. 37-03. The role of the Long Beach Economic Development Commission is to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on matters affecting economic development within the City. The Economic Development Commission unanimously recommends timely and immediate action to certify the EIR.

The Commission rejects the false 'business versus neighborhoods' dichotomy that is so often carelessly used to describe the public debate over the airport. Modernization of the airport terminal is not a zero-sum game in which the winner takes all. Rather, the Commission believes that what supports a thriving business climate, including creation and retention of jobs, in turn supports our local economy and our neighborhoods. When business is stifled, jobs disappear, lowering our tax base and our property values. This is a fundamental premise of the Commission's Jobs and Business Strategy, which was approved by this Council last year. The Airport, together with its surrounding businesses, is a key economic engine that supports our entire City and region. Continued Airport operations have substantial positive impact on the City's long-term business growth and workforce development. Support our Airport and surrounding businesses, and neighborhoods thrive.

Given the profound economic impact of the Long Beach Airport, the Commission has studied the issue of airport terminal improvements for the past two years. Toward that end, the Commission has reviewed the Environmental Impact Report, including the detailed project impacts and mitigation measures presented. The report concludes that the Proposed Project "does not result in substantially greater impacts than the other build alternatives" and declares the proposed improvements as the "environmentally superior alternative." Further, the EIR thoroughly addressed the concerns raised in the extensive public comment period.

Appellants cite the possibility that certification of the EIR and construction of the Proposed Project may cause airlines or other interested parties to mount a legal challenge to the noise ordinance. Litigation over the noise ordinance is always a possibility regardless of any action that Council may take concerning the airport, so that is not a valid reason to reverse the Planning Commission's unanimous decision to certify the EIR. The remote prospect of litigation challenging the noise ordinance for the purpose of obtaining more flights than those permitted under the noise ordinance does not justify a refusal to improve the airport facilities to accommodate flights currently permitted under the existing ordinance.

In summary, the Economic Development Commission encourages the application of sensible, city-wide economic policies. The Long Beach Airport is a vital economic engine that benefits our entire city as a whole. Improvement and modernization of the Long Beach Airport is sorely needed and is long overdue. Sensible policies, such as modernizing and improving the Airport, the gateway to our great City, should not idle in the name of 'not-in-my-backyard' politics, especially when the EIR is reasonably tailored to address current and allowable passenger demand under the noise ordinance.

The Economic Development Commission respectfully urges the Mayor and City Council to assert their leadership on this critical issue by certifying the EIR and moving forward with necessary airport improvements without further delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Rusnak", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Susan Rusnak, Chairman

Business Development Committee

City of Long Beach Economic Development Commission

Cc: Gerald R. Miller, City Manager

Robert Swayze, Manager Economic Development Bureau