

Re-envisioning Whiteman Airport Community Advisory Committee Meeting: Summarized Public Comments, September 23, 2021

Matthew:

My name is Matthew, and I am a pilot who flies out of Whiteman. I've been involved with the Airport for 25 years now. I want to remind the committee of a problem; I brought this issue previously. The testing equipment for air sampling is poorly positioned if you look at pollution sources. Where instrumentation is placed is a concern. There is one place on the far side of the Airport terminal, analyst said he can't tell between road and air pollution. And one at north end of the airport is placed up against the fence, and if an RV is parked next to it, there could be pollution oozing in from the street (instead of the Airport). It would be wise to check the positioning of the instrumentation and see if there might not be a better place. With these two locations, you can't tell if the source is the road or Airport. The accuracy of the source of pollution as the results could be corrupted and that cast doubt on legitimacy of readings. That should be addressed. Second of all, I am disappointed to see that there were four committee members voted in favor of reducing public speaking time to two minutes. It is a freedom of speech matter. If you make it two minutes, that will allow people and their friends to come and speak and tout bumper sticker sayings such as "Shut Down the Airport." It doesn't inspire useful dialogue and that would be unfair to the committee and community. We had at the last meeting, a Pacoima Beautiful person called in and didn't acknowledge they're a Pacoima Beautiful person, David Diaz. That's just not right. If they're going to call in and are affiliated with someone on the committee – they're not legitimate.

James (phone call):

Great presentation, Kelly. I have two questions: How do you know when you're doing air quality testing that you're not detecting from planes from Burbank? How do you know if there are drones flying around? I know they affect the air signals. Does Whiteman Airport monitor noise levels coming from the Airport?

The Mortons:

I'd like to address Ms. Padilla's concerns that she spoke about airport security and flight training environment. As a local CFI and longtime airport user, prior to September 11, airport security was pretty lax like all airports at the time. There was only a three-foot fence around the perimeter, a lot of gates were unlocked, and anybody could walk in and take flight instruction training on the spot. After Sept 11, that all changed. Security at the Airport and all US airports have been greatly enhanced. There is at least a 6-foot-high fence and key cards are required at the gates. Now very difficult to get on the Airport unless you have a keycard and flight training is more difficult, especially for non-citizens as extensive background checks are required. It's now illegal to provide flight

instruction to non-citizen without background check. US citizens can get flight training with ID including photo ID, driver's license and passport.

About pollution, consider the Airport in context of other alternative uses. Look at size of the airport over 180 acres and the actual amount of emissions from vehicles and aircraft is quite low when you consider the size of the facility. For example, if you were to replace the Airport with 500 homes, then you would have 500 gas furnaces emitting pollutions, 500 gas heaters, and 2.5 cars per household again emitting pollution. Unless you replace the Airport with public park, you may be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

John:

We wouldn't be here except that last December, LA City Council member Monica Rodriguez called Whiteman Airport "a blight on the Pacoima neighborhood." She called on the County to close the airport, calling it a step toward demanding environmental and economic justice for residents. "In addition to the obvious safety risk," she said, "the many takeoffs and landings each day produce large amounts of toxic pollutants." Let's take a close look at this. First, perhaps the most important issue: safety. The Airport has been here for 75 years, and the question is: Has anyone on the ground ever been killed by an airplane? The answer is no. Not one. How many people have been killed by the Metrolink and freight trains with tracks right next to the Airport runways? The answer is dozens, tragically, if not hundreds. How many people have been killed on the nearby freeways? Hundreds, if not thousands, stretching back decades. Yet, no one would ever consider shutting down the trains or the freeways. The next important issue is air pollution and noise. There is nothing noisier and more polluting than the Metrolink and freight trains on the tracks next to the runway. They are powered by diesel engines, the dirtiest of all engines. The constant heavy traffic on the 5 and 170 freeways also contributes air pollution in Pacoima. And by the way, the railroad tracks and freeways are all upwind from the three monitors now being used to test the air on the airport. Mr. Schaffer, who is conducting the measurements, admitted during in the previous CAC meeting there is no way to differentiate between pollution from airplanes and other sources, which one of your leaders noted quite rightly. No one likes to talk about it, but everyone knows there are problems in Pacoima, but they are not at the airport. It is a high crime area where, in some sections, gangs own the streets, tragically, after dark. Those streets are not safe. The Airport is a safe place offering anyone who wants it a change to get involved in aviation. The door is particularly open to young people. This committee is charged with reimagining the airport. Let's reimagine it as a wonderful asset offering opportunities to all Pacoima residents if they want to pursue them. Shutting down Whiteman makes as much sense as closing all the libraries in Pacoima. Or closing the nearby city golf course. We all need Whiteman Airport and all it offers to the community.

Jalon:

My question is geared for LA County Public Works. Why aren't we discussing closing all the airports in San Fernando Valley? Why are we just talking about closing one airport here in Pacoima? Why is one community more important than the rest of us living in the flight paths of the other two airports in the San Fernando Valley? Here in my home in Burbank, I am right under the flight path in Burbank. I don't like having 747s, big planes, landing 1500 feet above my house on their approach to Burbank. The answer is – We know that airports exist for the greater good of the community. To think otherwise is ludicrous. Truthfully, I have to question the ulterior motives of the Councilwoman and Pacoima Beautiful for suggesting that closing the Airport is the only way to improve to improve the Pacoima community. As Mr. Marshall noted earlier, there are a lot of other ways that Pacoima could be improved. And to Ms. Veronica Padilla, I would ask you if you register your intent when you get into your car to drive. Because people can kill others with your cars. That's the same of asking us that are flying to register our intents. There are those of us who are flying for business, for personal reasons or donating our time to serve charitable causes or organizations. There's no reason for us to register our intent the same way there's no reason to register our intent when you get in your car. I think Whiteman should be re-envisioned to build more community involvement, serve the community with good restaurants, a good viewing platform to sit and spend time at the airport. Visit other local airports like Bracken and San Gabriel and Camarillo and Torrance Airports to see how the public spends time there –beautiful restaurants, great viewing areas and the public spends their time there.

Yolanda:

From my understanding, the fuel used in the airport is lead-based fuel. I'm a Pacoima Beautiful community organizer. I would like to see the County conduct lead-based testing for the community. And I want to see honest information about the mental and physical impacts that Whiteman Airport has caused in the past 75 years. There's a difference between firefighter airplane use and what Whiteman users have done and their flight paths. Want to see more honest feedback and data on uses in the past.

Maria:

I'm the new community school coordinator for Sharp Avenue Elementary, located on Sharp Avenue and Pierce Street. We are also re-envisioning the school to transfer it into a model called community school, taking a whole child approach. We want to make the school a hub for the community. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the airport, especially how it can support our children and families. We are welcoming local partnerships. Thank you for the flyer and inviting us to be involved in the Re-envisioning Whiteman Airport process. I will let the school know about the Young Eagles event this weekend.

Luis:

I want to applaud the work of Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez for her innovative vision for our community and what she's doing for our young people and same for Pacoima Beautiful, thank you. We are a challenging community. I invite you to try our tamales and tacos and see how beautiful it is in Pacoima, to take a stroll. It would be more beautiful if we didn't have to deal with the blight of the Airport and the constant flying. It's a drop in the bucket on a national perspective to close this down. Gangs used to be a problem, but it's improved, we're going to keep getting better. Sure, we know Airport does some good things, but there's a lot more we could do with that space. I want to see the young people get involved, to have a say in what goes on in our community. I'm a homeowner and have lived in Pacoima my whole life. Sad some people have this attachment to the Airport, we have to move on, it's an indigenous community, we were here before the airport. Encourage everyone to keep going, and we need accurate representation. What is this money that goes into the Airport? The Airport isn't pretty, hasn't changed. Let's get jobs for our young people, make community places for young people to go. When I was young, we had nowhere to go, we had to go to other communities. Let's create a great place for our youth and families to enjoy; we need walking paths, more bike space. Let's get a baseline, don't worry about the sensors, and see where we're at. Keep going.

Dave:

I am a flight instructor at Glendale College. We are the largest users of Whiteman Airport. Whiteman Airport has enormous community and public benefit. A lot of public safety, fire and police are based there. The Airport creates roughly 412 jobs with the multiplier effect, which generates about \$90 million annually in the community. The Airport and surrounding communities benefit from about \$54 million in total Airport spending each year. Aviation has one of the highest average starting salaries. If you turn Whiteman Airport into a park, starting salaries are about \$44,000 a year, looking at places like Anaheim. Retail, if you were to turn Whiteman Airport into a shopping mall, salary about \$30,000. If you look at aerospace workers, salaries are on average are \$118,00 for entire industry in aviation. Looking to the future, yes, there's lead in aviation fuel, just like there was in lead in car fuel, but we are moving to electric- and hydrogen-powered aircraft with minimal operating impact on the environment. I'd encourage you, when you're looking at Whiteman Airport, all the employees and public benefit, think about our future, 10, 20 years on the road and the students who are going through the aviation program. More than 100 students a year go through the aviation program and are going into the surrounding community and coming back with high-skilled jobs.

Kevin:

President, Foothill Trail Neighborhood Council, but speaking tonight as private citizen.

Our Neighborhood Council shares a border with Pacoima and over the 11 years I've been president, we have worked with community organizations in Pacoima, many problems don't restrict themselves to these borders. My concern is the scope of the outreach for these meetings. I found out about this meeting from a friend of a friend. As was mentioned in the meeting earlier, the Airport might be physically in Pacoima, but airports have regional impact. It would have been nice to hear about this. Moving forward, I'll put meeting information in our newsletter to let people know what's going on. I recognize the importance of government and I've been with the City of LA for four years, so I know challenges of community. To have good regional solution, we need regional players. We welcome outreach from the CAC to our Neighborhood Council and ask that we be keep informed. Would have been nice if I heard about this earlier.

Elisa:

I was born and raised in Pacoima and live a couple of blocks from the Airport. I am so proud that Pacoima has an airport. Why? Every time there's an emergency, they leave from here to go save peoples' lives. I understand there was an accident. How many accidents has the Metro had, just right across the street from airport? Metro has had three accidents and it's still crossing there. In terms of pollution—why don't we talk about the 5G, why don't we talk about the Metrolink (Metro Light Rail) that is going down Van Nuys Blvd. and will take some businesses away from there. The airport offers a lot of services. Now, it's a two-way street. Shame on them for not doing proper outreach and shame on us for not knocking on the door and asking what are you doing, how we can work together? I appreciate that they are having an event this weekend, to plant seeds in our children, in our community, that they can become pilots, they can build a plane. In District 7 and Pacoima, I know a lot of people that work in the Air Force business, aerospace, in Porter Ranch, Valencia, San Fernando. In San Fernando, they closed an airport to make open space and now it's a swap meet. What open space is that? Would they put more Section 8 housing? We have enough homes. Put more people here when we don't have enough have police and now, you're going to put us more at risk when we don't have enough police to protect us? Please don't close the Airport. They need to do more proper outreach, but they do a lot for the community. Wherever there's a disaster around the world, they leave from here.

Ernesto:

I live here in Pacoima, a few blocks off Van Nuys and I'm member of LA Raza Unida. We're demanding to be part of these meetings and part of whole process. For generation, we've served as a "butt" of the rest of the Valley, they dump everything over here and we never had a say. Whiteman Airport, to a lot of us, is just the same as when freeways were built, dumps that line community, and the gas pipeline down San Fernando and train tracks. A lot of stuff should be shut down or regulated, not just the airport. Our community should be taken into consideration. Why do we have to fight for every single thing that we have and people from outside telling us what we need. We

know what we need and want and don't need people from outside the community telling us. We know what it is. Whiteman Airport can be used for a lot more. Maybe it serves some good beneficial stuff, and a lot of people are attached to it, well, go put it in your community. If you think services are vital, there's Burbank Airport. Our community has the right to control what happens in our community. The people for Pacoima for the people of Pacoima, not people from outside saying get used to it, like it because I say so. We don't need people from outside our community telling us it is good for us. Those airplanes are flying over us. I hope people can take that into consideration. I hope there can be a lot more outreach to our community because this is an insult. If you have Metro coming in, and hardly any outreach was done to our community and when it is, it's at times we can't go. We're working-class people and can't leave jobs for meeting in middle of the day. Way more outreach shows the respect we deserve.

Roberto:

Executive Director of California Community Economic Development Association and Principal of Aquaria Funding Solutions. I've put in the chat a study that I completed on behalf of ICON, as a roadmap of closure of the Whiteman Airport. I'm happy to talk to any CAC members about the study and answer questions you may have, goes into detail on FAA, and assurances and requirements and the possibility of closure. Let's be clear, the Airport exists for 606 fixed wing plane owners, a number of news helicopters, County fire service operations, and a few antique car owners. We want to keep fire service operation there, important to community, important in area. The news helicopters can go to Van Nuys, and the 600 fixed wing operators can go to either Palmdale or Van Nuys. This is an exploitation of a disenfranchised community by a privileged community of plane owners who want to continue their privilege. In this time of national commitment to environmental and social justice, it seems almost a given that closing a Whiteman Airport would be accepted by all those who want to address centuries of injustice and inequity to black and brown communities, not just in Pacoima but in metropolitan Los Angeles. By some estimates, there is over 1 million square feet of developmental land, development that could be in excess of a half-billion dollars. In a community that needs jobs, needs housing, needs public amenities. In the middle of housing crisis, and time of 80 percent unemployment, and facing climate crisis, who would want to hold on to this archaic monument to self-interest. Please look at the study I provided you. (Note: There was no working link to the study provided.) The airport needs to be closed and the property needs to be developed in interest and support of community it exists in.

Cynthia:

We moved here back in 2009, and we live very close to the Airport, right next door. My condo complex is Portofino. Every time an airplane is taking off or chopper flying

overhead, it is extremely loud. Especially the services, the big choppers, when they come, it's extremely loud and rattles the whole condo complex, the windows are shaking. If someone is working from home, it is disturbing. We had the pandemic, when I was home, my husband was working from home, my daughter was home. It was very difficult, even if we shut the windows, you could still hear everything. It was very distributing. It was interrupting our meetings, interrupting my daughter's school. That's just one of the downfalls. Other thing I'm concerned about, from what I've read, about the pollution, there's a lot of health problems. I didn't develop asthma until after I moved here. I was using inhaler, a few emergency pumps, and now supposed to be taking every single day. If I'm having health issues, how many other people nearby are affected? It would be nice to have more community outreach there, some kind of services that address homelessness, mental health services, anything like that.

Cessi:

I've been around Whiteman Airport for over 46 years; I am literally ashamed that a community would want to close a valuable resource. This Airport that provides opportunity, education and safety to its residents. It's counterproductive and illogical to shut doors for your children. There are many, many educational opportunities at the Airport. When you know more about them, you'll want to keep those opportunities. I invite you to come visit the Airport and learn more about why so valuable to you and your children. One of the programs is the Aviation Explorers, the most impressive educational program at Whiteman. It provides free ground instruction, low-cost flight training and career guidance for teenagers. Many of our Explorers now work in aerospace and aviation, and they earn a significant amount of money compared to a lot of the jobs that are available. We have free Young Eagle flights to expose children to aviation. We offer Scouting merit badges, build a plane program for youth, Civil Air Cadets for teenagers and middle schoolers, and there are many women pilots at Whiteman to serve as role models for girls. Girls need to know they too can reach their dreams in aviation. Come take tours, visit aviation businesses, ask about the Explorers, we welcome you. Please come learn about these educational opportunities. You don't need to shut down the Airport to have more educational opportunities.

Phone call x2763:

I've heard a lot of statements made today about that Whiteman Airport that are based in fantasies and political agenda. There are no studies about air quality that can be linked to the Whiteman Airport. They do not have an exceedingly bad safety record. This is all data that can be looked up. There is a group that has a political agenda that is pushing these fantasies about the Airport. The Airport has been there since before all these condos went in. Understanding it's frustrating to be next to airport but when you moved in, Airport was already there. Are there things that can be improved, with noise

level and flight patterns? Perhaps, that's a great discussion. You don't get to close down the Airport because all of a sudden you don't like it. Why don't we close Van Nuys Airport or LAX? Next to every airport, there is a community. This is a small Airport that is responsible for search and rescue, fire, many great things happen at this Airport. There's a youth program. It is ironic that Pacoima Beautiful planned their rally the same day the youth program is being held at the airport. Everyone is welcome. Let's not be political about everything in the world. Let's talk about facts and logic and common sense.