

# **SAN DIEGO**

## **International Airport**

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AIRPORT MASTER PLAN  
SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

### **CHAPTER 1**

Introduction



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

San Diego International Airport (SDIA or the Airport) is the primary commercial service airport hosting air transportation activity in the San Diego region. The Airport is owned and operated by the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (the Authority). In June 2004 the Authority commenced an update to the Airport's most recent Master Plan, which was published in 2001 but was not adopted.

Four distinct events, ranging in magnitude, but all affecting SDIA, have necessitated that the Master Plan be updated.

The four critical events that have led to the Authority's decision to update the SDIA Master Plan include:

1. The events of September 11, 2001.
2. The transfer of airport ownership and operation from the San Diego Unified Port District (SDUPD, or the Port District) to the Authority in 2003.
4. The new aviation activity forecast of future aviation demand at SDIA completed in May 2004.
3. The Airport Site Selection Program (ASSP) which culminated in a county-wide ballot measure in November 2006.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, affected the aviation industry on a global scale as well as on a regional scale, including airports such as SDIA. Demand for air travel, internationally and particularly within the United States, was significantly reduced, driving multiple U.S. airlines into bankruptcy. The event also resulted in a complete restructuring of security procedures at U.S. airports.

The transfer of airport ownership and operation from the Port District on January 1, 2003 shifted planning responsibilities, operation, and control of the Airport to the Authority. The Authority is governed by a nine-member Board, who are responsible for all policy and planning decisions for the Airport. Three of the Board members are paid, and constitute the Executive Committee. All Board members are appointed. Seven Board members are appointed by mayors of various communities within San Diego County. One Board member is appointed by the San Diego County Sheriff. The final appointing authority is the Governor of the State of California.

The Authority prepared a new aviation activity forecast, which was published in May 2004. The forecast analyzes future aviation activity and demand in the San Diego Region through 2030. The forecast is based on regional growth and economic trends as well as recent events that impacted aviation activity, such as the previously mentioned terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

A program was initiated in 2001 to study potential airport sites in the San Diego region to replace the existing airport facility at SDIA. The program was originally known as the Air Transportation Action Program (ATAP) and was a joint program of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the Port District. Upon assuming ownership and operation of the Airport, the Authority funded and managed the program, which was referred to as the Airport Site Selection Program (ASSP). As part of the Airport Site Selection Program, the Authority was required to have a county-wide advisory ballot measure with an airport recommendation in November 2006.

## **History and Background**

SDIA was dedicated as the San Diego region's municipal airport on August 28, 1928. On December 18, 1962, the San Diego Unified Port District was created when the State Legislature approved Senate Bill 41, which was certified by the County Board of Supervisors. District purview included ownership and operation of the Airport. More recently, Assembly Bill 93 established the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Act in 2002, which created the Authority as a local entity of regional government to oversee the Airport operations. The bill also required the Authority to adopt the comprehensive airport

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land use plan and submit a site selection for a future regional airport. California State Governor Gray Davis signed Senate Bill 1896 into law in August 2002, which amended Assembly Bill 93 regarding the selection and appointment of Authority Board members. Finally, on January 1, 2003, the ownership and operation of SDIA was transferred to the Authority from the Port District as required by the Airport Authority Act.

From 1960 to 2000 the San Diego County population grew from approximately one million residents to approximately three million residents. Each of the three existing passenger terminals at SDIA was constructed during this forty-year period while annual passenger totals at SDIA increased from 2.6 million to over 7.5 million between 1980 and 2000.

The existing airport site is severely constrained by its location. The Airport is bounded by Harbor Drive and San Diego Bay to the south, Navy Lagoon to the west, the United States Army's Marine Corps Recruit Depot to the north, and Interstate 5 and Pacific Highway to the east. Land in the airport vicinity is densely developed and has a high monetary value due to the Airport's proximity of less than two miles from Downtown San Diego. Further, the Airport is the smallest major airport site in the U.S. at less than 1,000 acres.

Due to these constraints, from 2003 to November 7, 2006, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority conducted a comprehensive study of relocating the region's primary commercial airport or enhancing San Diego International Airport's capacity with a connecting inter-tie across San Diego Bay to transport passengers and cargo to the airfield and runways on Naval Air Station North Island.

Potential sites for relocating San Diego International Airport have been under continuous study since 2001, beginning with the Air Transportation Action Program, a joint effort of the San Diego Association of Governments and the Port District. Oversight of the Air Transportation Action Program was provided by the Joint Airport Advisory Committee, which was comprised of the San Diego Association of Governments' Transportation Subcommittee and the Board of Airport Commissioner's Airport Ad Hoc Committee. Upon formation of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority in January 2003, the responsibility for the identification and evaluation of potential sites shifted from the Joint Airport Advisory Committee to the Authority's Board, within the context of what was initiated as the Air Transportation Action Program and is now known as the Airport Site Selection Program.

Through the course of evaluating 30 possible sites and applying "screening criteria" to winnow the range of potential options, nine sites were identified as candidates for further analysis. The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority selected five of these sites to undergo a comprehensive detailed alternative analysis for the purpose of developing a recommendation for a new airport location. In accordance with the same state law that created the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, the recommendation was presented to the people of San Diego County as a ballot measure for a county-wide vote in November 2006. It is important to note that although the Airport Site Selection Program process was conducted concurrent with the San Diego International Airport Master Plan process, the two processes were separate and not interdependent. The Airport Site Selection Program evaluated the potential of relocating San Diego International Airport to a site that could be developed and operated in a manner that meets the County's projected long-term commercial aviation needs through 2030 and beyond. The Airport Master Plan is intended to identify and set forth a measured, incremental improvement program for existing San Diego International Airport that addresses the more immediate needs of the airport, irrespective of the outcome of the Airport Site Selection Program process. Conversely, the completion of the Airport Site Selection Program was not dependent on the assumptions or outcome of the Airport Master Plan. Once the Airport Site Selection Program process was completed, including the vote on the November 2006 ballot measure recommendation, and if a formal decision was made by the Authority to advance a long-term airport solution toward implementation; the various federal, state, and local permit and approval processes would need to be completed. This would include the necessary environmental

reviews required under the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The advisory ballot measure was identified as San Diego County Measure A, in the November 7, 2006 election, and was worded as follows:

*“To provide for San Diego’s long-term transportation needs, shall the Airport Authority and government officials work to obtain approximately 3,000 of 23,000 acres at MCAS Miramar by 2020 for a commercial airport, provided necessary traffic and freeway improvements are made, military readiness is maintained without expense to the military for modifying or relocating operations, no local taxes are used on the airport, overall noise impacts are reduced, and necessary Lindbergh Field improvements are completed?”*

The final decision was made by the voters of San Diego County and the measure did not pass in a final result of 61.83% No and 38.17% Yes (County of San Diego, Election Results 2006).

Specifically, the state law that established the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority required that the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority conduct thorough studies of potential airport sites and propose a ballot measure regarding a possible new airport location for county-wide vote. If the voters had determined to create a new airport, and indicated the proposed location, the final selection and implementation of any new airport would have been subject to a separate review process as required by the California Environmental Quality Act. Neither this program Environmental Impact Report nor the Airport Master Plan are intended to cover or include a new airport. Because the specific information is not known about a new airport at this time, it would be speculative to attempt to analyze the environmental impacts of a new airport in this document.

### **The Master Plan**

The master plan is a concept for the long-term development of an airport. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5070-6 "Airport Master Plans" provides guidance for preparing airport master plans pursuant to the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982. Preparation of a master plan allows an airport to seek specific federal grants and funds associated with this federal law for improvements associated with the airport master plan.

The Port District prepared SDIA's first comprehensive Master Plan document in 2001. This Master Plan, however, was not adopted, and the associated environmental analysis was not completed prior to the transfer of airport ownership and operation to the Authority in January 2003. The transfer of ownership and operation to the Authority, in addition to the aforementioned events that impacted SDIA, have resulted in the need for an updated master plan addressing the Airport's current opportunities and constraints as well as the latest aviation activity forecast information. The Authority hired HNTB Corporation in July 2004 as the primary consultant to prepare a new airport master plan.

Airport master plans are typically updated once every ten years. Because the SDIA Master Plan was last completed three years ago in 2001, this current Master Plan is largely an update to the previously published Master Plan. The inventory of airport facilities in this Master Plan, which identifies the quantity, size, location, and condition (among other characteristics) of the Airport's physical infrastructure, is largely a verification of the findings from the previous Master Plan. This methodology for conducting the inventory is feasible due to the relatively short period of time between the two master plans, in addition to the fact that no major changes have occurred at SDIA since the previous Master Plan. This methodology will also aide in the preparation of the Master Plan on a very rapid schedule that will provide key data and analysis for the Authority prior to the conclusion of the ASSP, while concurrently providing valuable insight and guidance for the conclusion of the ASSP.

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### **Summary**

This current Master Plan is an update to the previous Master Plan published in 2001. Four key events necessitated preparation of an updated master plan, including the events of September 11, 2001, the transfer of ownership and operation of the airport, the preparation of a new aviation activity forecast, and the ASSP. The Master Plan documents the Authority's planning process for SDIA and provides guidance for development of the airport to meet continued passenger, cargo, and operations growth at SDIA.