

City Council Supports Plan To Eliminate Two Runways At LGB

By Ashleigh Ruhl

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Following an Airfield Geometric Study designed to evaluate the efficiency and safety of the airstrips and taxiways at Long Beach Airport, the City Council last week voted in support of eliminating two of the airport's five runways.

Removing the two north-south runways won't in any way change commercial or general aviation traffic patterns, and won't impact the city's noise ordinance, said Reggie Harrison, interim director of LGB.

"The two runways that are recommended for elimination have not been in operation for a number of years, in great part due to them not being needed," Harrison said. "The FAA has recognized that we have an overabundance of runways, and they have not funded rehabilitation of those runways for a number of years."

LGB's rich history in the city, he explained, has left the airport with an airfield footprint that needs to be brought into the modern age.

Eliminating two unused runways, which were visual runways only (not lit and not instrumented), also is cost-efficient, saving approximately \$1.3 million per year in upkeep. Additionally, the removal will allow the airport to create new taxiways and find alternative uses, even money-generating opportunities, for some of the space.

Jeff Sedlak, senior engineer at LGB, said the change to the runway configuration is all about creating a more efficient and safer asset for the city of Long Beach. After a three-year study was conducted, as well as dozens of meetings with various stakeholders, he said it's clear that the runways need to be put to better use.

The two airstrips slated for removal, he added, were built sometime in the 1960s, updated in the 1980s, and have fallen into disrepair. But their removal won't happen overnight.

Before the airfield can be modified, Sedlak said there are several more steps in the process, including getting the plan approved by the FAA. He expects the changes, expected to cost about \$120 million, to be implemented incrementally over the next two decades. The money will come mostly through federal grants, with an estimated \$11 million match from the airport's Passenger Facility Charge program.

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Long Beach Airport