



General Aviation Improvement Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is General Aviation?

General Aviation (GA) is the operation of civilian aircraft for purposes other than commercial passenger transport, including personal, business, and instructional flying, and the aircraft flown for these purposes.

2. What is the General Aviation Improvement Program (GAIP)?

The GAIP studied the GA facilities at JWA, including analyzing the existing facilities' compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements. A complete review of the GA facilities at JWA had not been completed since 1990. The age of the GA facilities and the need to comply with FAA safety requirements related to the proximity of buildings and roads to runways and taxiways underscored the need for a comprehensive evaluation.

The GAIP objectives include enhancing safe and secure operations, utilizing limited land area efficiently and economically, enhancing compatibility between general aviation and commercial operations, and embracing flexibility to allow for market trends.

3. How was the definition of “Small GA” determined?

The “Small GA” definition is derived from federal regulations. Aircraft with a wingspan of less than 49 feet fall within FAA Design Group I, the smallest category of aircraft design groups, and aircraft with a maximum certificated takeoff weight not exceeding 12,500 pounds meet the FAA’s definition of “small aircraft.”

4. Why is John Wayne Airport proposing to rebuild its general aviation facilities? Is this an expansion of the Airport?

The hangars currently on the airfield were constructed in 1990 and have come to the end of their useful life. The existing hangars will be torn down, and new hangar facilities better suited to the modern fleet of aircraft will be constructed.

There are currently two full-service Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) and one limited-service FBO operating facilities at JWA. The improvements under the GAIP are contained within the existing GA footprint on the airfield; the GAIP is not an expansion of the GA areas or Airport boundaries.

5. What is a Fixed Base Operator (FBO)? What is the difference between a full-service and a limited-service FBO?

Full-service FBOs provide aviation fuel and full-service fueling operations, aircraft repair and maintenance services; charter operations; and aircraft wash facilities. They also manage hangar and tie-down facilities and transient aircraft parking.

Limited-service FBOs provide light aircraft repair and maintenance services, self-service fueling facilities, aircraft wash facilities, and manage hangar storage operations, tie-down facilities, and transient aircraft parking.

6. Will the GAIP cause the number of nighttime flights at JWA to increase?

The GAIP will not cause the number of nighttime flights at JWA to increase. The GAIP provided an analysis of the types of facilities provided at JWA to accommodate GA operations. General aviation flights during nighttime hours average seven departures and five arrivals per week. Airport staff does not expect to see a significant increase in the GA air traffic in the foreseeable future.

7. Neighboring communities do not want more business jets at John Wayne Airport. Why is JWA building larger hangars?

The Airport cannot deny access to aircraft that can be physically accommodated on the airfield, with or without adequate facilities. The upgrades are necessary to maintain airfield safety and security.

There are currently many more GA jet aircraft on the airfield than JWA has available hangar space. Many of the existing hangars are not large enough to accommodate newer aircraft with larger wingspans. Improving the GA facilities and adding additional hangars will accommodate the jet aircraft already operating at JWA.

Providing hangar space for GA jets may limit the amount of GA activity. As an example, if there is no hangar space for a GA jet that is owned by a business or person based in Orange County, that aircraft may be housed elsewhere. That aircraft will fly into JWA to pick up passengers, fly to the destination, return to drop off passengers, and fly out again to the base airport. This scenario may result in four total operations instead of two in and out of JWA.

8. Are scheduled charters, like JetSuiteX (JSX), considered to be General Aviation?

JWA considers operators that sell tickets to the general public and has a published schedule of two or more flights per week during any consecutive three-week period to be regularly scheduled commercial carriers, not GA. JSX is categorized as a regularly scheduled commercial carrier and is subject to all of the restrictions for commercial carriers outlined in the 1985 Settlement Agreement and the Access Plan, including abiding by the commercial carrier curfew, noise limits, and Million Annual Passengers limitation.

Charters that operate “on-demand” fractional ownership aircraft requiring paid membership, and private jets not available to the general public are not considered to be regularly scheduled commercial carriers.

9. Why does the Airport want to build a new international terminal for General Aviation aircraft? Who will be responsible for security at a new international terminal?

During the project scoping process, FBO operators and GA aircraft operators requested a facility for GA international arrivals. Currently, a GA flight from another country must make an intermediate stop to clear customs before traveling on to JWA.

JWA and its FBO tenants maintain security levels in accordance with Transportation Security Administration’s “Twelve-Five” Standard Security Program (TFSSP). FBO tenants comply with TSA regulations, including trace screening of baggage and passenger identification, vetting for scheduled public charters before boarding flights, background check on crew members, and restricting access to the flight deck area.

When a facility for international GA arrivals is constructed, it will be housed within one of the FBOs and operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

10. If JWA includes an international terminal at one of its GA FBOs, will more private aircraft want to land at JWA to clear U.S. Customs?

Generally, GA aircraft arriving from south of the U.S.-Mexico border must land at Brown Field in San Diego County, the designated airport nearest the border, for CBP processing. Unless the aircraft’s final destination is John Wayne Airport, GA aircraft cannot bypass Brown Field for CBP processing.

11. The 1985 Settlement Agreement is outdated. It is time to negotiate a new settlement agreement with stricter noise limits and curfews.

John Wayne Airport operates under one of the most restrictive access and noise programs in the country, with mandatory noise and passenger limits and nighttime curfew for commercial airlines.

The Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 (ANCA) is Federal law enacted by Congress to prevent a patchwork of conflicting regulations and restrictions on airports and aviation system users. While JWA’s access and noise regulations in the 1985 Settlement Agreement, Access Plan, and General Aviation Noise Ordinance (GANO) are grandfathered under ANCA, no additional restrictions can be imposed that reduce or further limit aircraft operations or affect aircraft safety.

12. Why are general aviation aircraft allowed to fly 24 hours a day? The nighttime noise limits are too high. Why can’t the noise limits be lower?

Hours of operation for GA aircraft cannot be restricted Under Federal law. The limits and hours are set forth in the General Aviation Noise Ordinance (GANO), which was adopted by the County in 1985, and cannot be made more restrictive in a manner that reduces or limits aircraft operations or affects aircraft safety.

GA aircraft are subject to lower nighttime noise limits for departures between the hours of 10:00 pm and 7:00 am, Monday through Saturday, and 10:00 pm and 8:00 am on Sunday, and for arrivals between 11:00 pm and 7:00 am, Monday through Saturday and 11:00 pm and 8:00 am on Sunday.

13. Is the General Aviation Improvement Program intended to boost revenue for the Airport?

While GA accounts for more than 67% of total airport operations (takeoffs and landings), it represents only 3.4% of total Airport revenue. The GAIP will not result in a significant increase in GA revenue.

14. Neighboring communities are very concerned that additional flights will have a negative impact on the environment and air quality. Has the County done an environmental and health risk analysis study?

The comprehensive Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluated Aesthetics, Air Quality, Cultural/Scientific Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards, and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Transportation/Traffic, Tribal and Cultural Resources, Utilities, and Service Systems, Water Quality Cumulative Impacts, and Long-Term Implications of the Proposed Project.

The complete Draft EIR, including the Health Risk Assessment, is available on the JWA website. www.OCAir.com/generalaviation/gaimprovement