

# Speak out. We're listening.

Each of the 22 members of the Airport/Community Roundtable is either a directly elected public official or the appointed delegate representing a public agency. But you don't need to be in public office to have a voice in Roundtable activities.

To encourage public participation in a subject which affects so many communities, the Roundtable conducts on-going public information efforts, including press releases, media notices and public distribution of background material. The Roundtable *Monitor* newsletter is a key element of that effort. To educate and stimulate airport neighbors to get involved it is necessary to reach out. Tell us what you think.

Jot down your ideas below and return it to the Airport/Community Roundtable. We'd like to know of your specific interest so that we may address those subjects in subsequent issues.

## Write today!

Write your comments here (type or print clearly):

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Attach another sheet if necessary. Return to:  
David Carbone, Roundtable Administrative Office,  
350 Harbor Way, So. San Francisco, CA 94080

If you wish to be contacted about Roundtable issues, please provide:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

To be placed on the Monitor mailing list, please provide:

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**Monitor**

WINTER 1998



*From* **The Airport**  
**Runway study promises major gains against noise**  
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## Lead Story

# Runway reconfiguration study alternatives

Preliminary findings

Roundtable timeline



*From* **The Chairman**  
**Backblast test project off to good start**  
See Page 2

## From the Airport

### Major improvement

By John L. Martin  
Director  
San Francisco International Airport

Since becoming the Director of San Francisco International Airport, addressing community concerns about aircraft noise has been a top priority. In this column, I frequently share information about our latest effort to reduce noise impacts on neighbors. And while we have had many successes in recent years, none would do as much to cut noise impacts as the reconfiguration of our runways.

More than a year ago, the Airport/Community Roundtable asked the Airport to conduct a Runway Reconfiguration Study to look at noise reductions. We are now more than midway through this process.

By the end of January, we expect to have an alternative runway configuration that keeps the Airport's existing four runways, but locates them in such a manner that will move airplanes and their noise impacts almost completely over water.

Shutting our existing Runway 28 Left and moving Runway 28 Right 4,300 feet northeast will push direct approaches well off the shore of Foster City. Shifting our 19/1 Runways north will relocate the power point almost a mile further away from residents in Millbrae and Burlingame. Additionally, extending and separating these runways will allow even the largest class of jets to take off over the Bay instead of over San Bruno, South San Francisco, Daly City and Pacifica.

An improvement in efficiency will mean fewer planes on the ground, idling their noisy engines, polluting the air and delaying passengers.

These runways will involve bay fill, but the environmental mitigation I want to pursue will add thousands of acres of saltwater marsh lands.

This project will allow improvements to air safety, to efficiency, and to the health of the San Francisco Bay. But most significantly to Roundtable members, the project will push aircraft and aircraft noise away from those of us on the Peninsula.

## From the Roundtable

### Roundtable anticipating runway study findings

One of the first recommendations of an expanded Airport/Community Roundtable this year directed San Francisco International Airport to study the possibility of reconfiguring its runway system. Six months later, that study has advanced to the preliminary stages.

At least preliminarily, the noise advantages of a reconfigured runway system are holding up under scrutiny.

Roundtable city membership has more than doubled over the past two years, with many new representatives taking office last Spring. Among their first tasks was consideration of a variance from state noise regulations under which SFO operates.

The Roundtable has been designated by the California Department of Transportation Aeronautics Program as the forum for discussion and monitoring of the airport's implementation of a noise abatement program.

The tool the Roundtable uses to discharge that responsibility is its annual Work Program. The runway reconfiguration study was a major outcome of public discussions and Roundtable deliberations on the current Work Program. That unanimous recommendation was folded into the state's newest three-year noise variance decision.

Any decision by the federal government to approve or reject a possible reconfiguration of airport runways will not be based in any way on the project's noise abatement qualities.

The Federal Aviation Administration operates under a Congressional mandate to oversee the safe and efficient use of the nation's airways.

Reconfiguration of SFO's runways is being proposed as a way to eliminate long flight delays and to make the airport layout safer for present and future generations of large aircraft.

Continued on next page

## From the Roundtable

### Backblast test house

Consultants are moving forward with a study of low-frequency noise effects on residential housing construction which goes beyond anything previously attempted by the Roundtable and the airport. Officially known as the backblast test project, this study examines the effects of a certain category of noise energy in particular areas behind Runways 1.

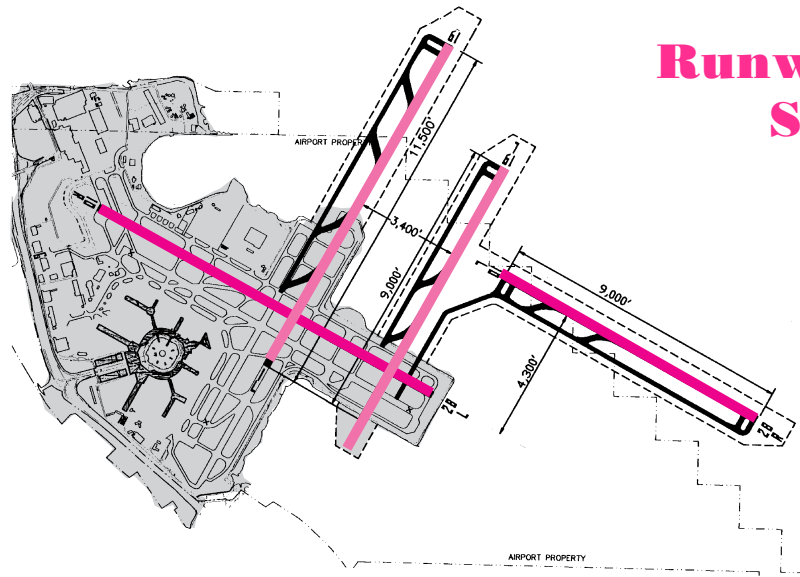
BBN Technologies of Southern California, the prime contractor, and Wyle Laboratories will perform acoustic tests in a laboratory with human subjects.

The goal is to quantify the effect on buildings and humans of low noise frequencies, some of which are beyond the range of the human ear to detect.

Low frequency noise is an issue behind jets on takeoff, but increasingly it is being seen more to the front and sides of jet engines as new sound suppression technologies affecting noise in the audible ranges causes a redistribution of sound energy.

The backblast test project will perform basic studies of three test houses. Two of these will be in Millbrae and one will be in Hillsborough. Both communities lie behind the most heavily-used takeoff runway. Many residences are in canyons out of sight of runways, but low frequency sound bounces off terrain for long distances and can even penetrate solid objects.

As a result of this stage of the study, one house — probably not one of the three — will be selected and leased for a battery of tests of noise-reducing technologies. This goes beyond the minimum noise impact standards of the state and federal governments. It is a good example of the airport's willingness to consider all possible options to mitigate airport noise. The study is key to the Joint Work Plan that was adopted as part of the final mitigation program of the airport's 1992 Master Plan. As lead agency for monitoring noise mitigation progress, the Roundtable had a strong role in adding this element to the mitigation program.

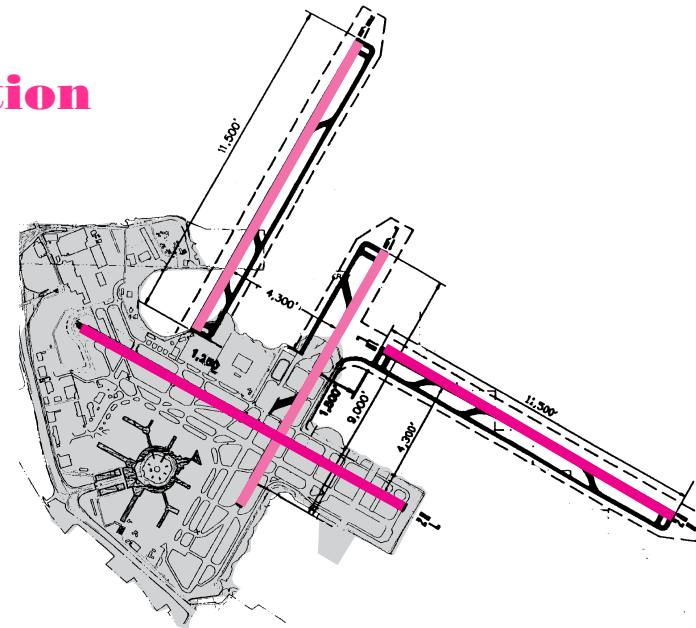


**Alternative BX**

## Runway Reconfiguration Study Focuses on Two of Several Alternatives

### Key

- Runways 1/19 Reconfiguration
- Runways 10/28 Reconfiguration
- Existing Airport Land Area



**Alternative F2**

Alternative BX would close existing Runways 28 Left and 1 Left. The new Runway 1 would be built in a new structure to the right of Runway 1 Right. Both Runways 1 would be relocated nearly a mile away from residential areas. BX has the advantage of moving two major runways — 1 Right and 28 Right — to the north and east, away from residential areas.

Alternative F2 separates Runways 1 Left and Right by moving the existing Runway 1 more left. This has the effect of bringing in the new Runway 28 Right closer to the existing land mass of San Francisco International Airport and requires less bay fill or new construction over Bay waters. This also moves the existing Runway 1 closer to areas of the South San Francisco

wider separation for safety. Present runways cannot handle parallel landings in bad weather, which cuts airport capacity from 60 planes per hour to 30. Resulting flight delays can back up incoming flights for hours, affecting airport operations across the country. SFO has the nation's worst record for flight delays among major international airports.

Runways 1/19 are separated as well for purposes of the study. This is significant because Runways 1/19 are the preferred runways for takeoffs in normal weather and traffic conditions. One option moves Runway 1 Left farther "left" towards South San Francisco. This is identified as Alternative BX.

The second major option being

considered makes a move similar to that proposed for Runways 28. It would move Runway 1 Left to the right of Runway 1 Right. Runway 1 Right then becomes 1 Left. The effect of this configuration, identified as Alternative F2, would be to move taxiing and takeoffs as much as a mile farther away from Millbrae.

Both alternatives have the same effect on jumbo jet takeoffs. The reconfigured Runway 1 would now be long enough to allow them to take off to the north, over the Bay, rather than to the west, over San Bruno, South San Francisco, Daly City and Pacifica.

The airport presented its preliminary findings to the Roundtable on December 2, 1998. Additional information will be presented to the Roundtable in the next few months.

## Preliminary Environmental Findings of the Study

Regulatory agencies require San Francisco International Airport to analyze the environmental impacts of every alternative runway project. Following are highlights of preliminary analyses of environmental impacts.

- Parallel runway alternatives to the existing Runway 10/28 system provide noise and overflight reduction for Foster City
- Alternatives shifting Runway 1 system northward provide the most noise reduction for Millbrae and Burlingame
- Significant reductions of residents within the 65 decibel CNEL noise contour in South San Francisco, San Bruno and Daly City are provided by runway alternatives allowing long-haul, heavy aircraft to depart on Runways 1 (instead of 28)
- All runway alternatives except the Do Nothing Alternative would improve land use compatibility in communities adjacent to the airport.
- All runway alternatives except Do Nothing improve air quality when the effects of flight delay reduction are considered
- Runway reconfiguration would affect between 429 and 1,832 acres of San Francisco Bay habitat either by dredge and fill, soil stabilization, fill and surcharge or a pile-supported structure
- Reconfiguration requires flight coordination with Oakland Metropolitan Airport across San Francisco Bay

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As a tangential benefit, however, its noise-reducing potential is of great interest to Roundtable cities.

As proposed for study, Runway 28 Left would be closed. Its replacement would be constructed 4,300 feet north of the existing Runway 28 Right. Runway 28 Right would become 28 Left. The new runway would become 28 Right.

Noise reductions of such a reconfiguration would be significant. Runways 28 are the preferred landing runways for all operations at SFO under normal weather and operating conditions. Additionally, because they are the longest and face into the prevailing westerly winds, they are the preferred takeoff runways for heavy jumbo jets crossing the Pacific Ocean.

In its most basic design, a reconfigured Runway 28 would move many landings almost a mile farther out over San Francisco Bay away from Roundtable member cities of Foster City, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo and Millbrae. It may have some positive impact on member cities farther south such as Redwood City, San Carlos, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside.

Several options considered for study have been accepted for more in-depth review. These took advantage of the new construction in the Bay to move the intersecting runway system, Runways 1/19, farther north as well.

The current runways were designed in the late 1940's and are 750 feet apart. The FAA currently recommends much

### How they are similar

- Would permit safe, simultaneous parallel landings on Runways 28 in any weather
- Would handle the next generation of larger aircraft safely
- Permits heavy jumbo jet takeoffs to be over water, rather than communities
- Moves taxiing, takeoffs and landings farther from populated areas

### How they differ

- BX has two runway intersections; F2 has one, offering more flexibility in operations
- BX relocates two major runways farther from populated areas than F2
- F2 requires a larger overwater structure or fill
- F2 would cost more to build

## Noise Variance Timeline

**May 1997**  
State Aeronautics Program Roundtable presentation on the noise variance process as it applies to San Francisco International Airport; notification that the then-current three-year variance would expire.

**June 1997**  
Full state presentation to Roundtable on proposed new variance, including the possibility of a runway reconfiguration study.

**July 1997**  
Roundtable requests that the Airport Director initiate a runway reconfiguration study.

**August 1997**  
Roundtable sets a September, 1997 public workshop for public input on draft variance content.

**September 1997**  
Public workshop in San Bruno draws more than 100 persons to discuss possible new variance recommendations, including runway study.

**November 1997**  
Roundtable circulates draft variance recommendations to be forwarded to the state and the airport.

**December 1997**  
Roundtable approves a recommendation to the California Department of Transportation Aeronautics Program that a runway reconfiguration study be included in the proposed three-year noise variance.

**May 1998**  
State issues draft noise variance which incorporates the recommendation that SFO undertake a formal study of alternative runway configurations.

**September 1998**  
Final variance decision by the State of California includes runway reconfiguration study requirement.

*The Airport/Community Roundtable meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Millbrae Recreation Center 477 Lincoln Circle Millbrae, California*

**Next meeting: January 6, 1999**  
For information call 650/876-7012