

# Runway Extension Safety Hoax, #248

## A note to Carlsbad Council Member Blackburn

By [Raymond Bender, Neighbor](#) | Jun 12, 2019 9:39 am ET | Updated Jun 12, 2019 9:42 am ET

### Playing the System

My back-east-visiting cousins were amazed at how well Uncle Levio could pick winners at the track. He touted the trainers, jockeys, and track condition to explain his winning ways. It was a cool joke. But after a few races, Uncle would smile in a worldly way and fess up. He had simply placed \$2 bets on all the horses running the race. A sure winner indeed. Pricey. But worth his smile.

So, you see, things are not always as they seem.

### County Playing Uncle

County too plays the system – the FAA Airport funding lottery system.

County met with the FAA to decide the passenger levels that county could use in its 2018 Palomar Master Plan (PMP). The FAA-predicted level was very low, the county level sky high.

Ultimately, the FAA played Solomon. Based on the county's hope that new, healthy air carriers would bet on Palomar in 2017, the FAA said the PMP could predict 300,000 to 500,000 Palomar passengers by 2035. But there was a catch. The FAA said:

*"FAA's understanding is that the County of San Diego (County) is not proposing any near-term terminal or airfield capacity projects that depend upon the PAL (Passenger Activity Level) forecast for justification. ...The FAA has no objection if the County chooses to base local land use planning decisions on the PAL forecast, however, any related mitigation measure would not be eligible for Airport Improvement Program funding."*[10/10/2017 FAA Letter to County.]

Was the FAA skepticism justified? Apparently so. Palomar Airport had sketchy passenger service in 2017, 2018, and as of June 2019. And an air carrier mechanic complained that safety concerns should have cancelled some Palomar flights. (See "*Mechanic Alleges Safety Warnings Ignored By Start-Up Carlsbad Airline*," by Kruger, Hargrove, and Jones 1/24/19 NBC News Broadcast.)

### **The Safety Solution**

So how does county get FAA funding for its projects, such as extending the runway several hundred feet? Simple, claim the extension is not made to attract more aircraft (a *capacity* justification) but to allow aircraft to fly more *safely*. After all, everyone knows that a longer runway means more stopping distance. Right?

Yes, a longer runway is safer. As long as the aircraft using Palomar do not grow and as long as the aircraft do not add more fuel to fly farther. But adding fuel means heavier aircraft that require longer stopping distances and noisier takeoffs. And bigger explosions if an on-airport crash ruptures the aircraft fuel tanks.

And longer runways attract larger, faster aircraft carrying 10 times more explosive aviation fuel than small aircraft carry. Think of it this way. Would you rather be a passenger on an FAA-rated B commuter aircraft with 500 gallons of aviation fuel or be on a faster FAA-rated C/D aircraft with 4000 gallons of aviation fuel crashing into the Palomar east end methane-emitting landfill?

Can the FAA be so easily fooled by Uncle County's effort to call a runway *capacity* improvement a *safety* improvement?

Council Member Blackburn, the foregoing comments should answer your council meeting question last night June 11. A longer Palomar runway will be less safe and create more noise. Moreover, the community concern is not noise at the airport but noise over our houses.