

# **FAA Community Stakeholder Meeting**

## **Community Perspectives on Helicopter Noise Problems in Los Angeles**

***FAA Regional Office  
15000 Aviation Boulevard  
Hawthorne CA 90250  
December 5, 2012***

# Community Members [1 of 2]

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- ◆ **George Abrahams**
  - **Beachwood Canyon Neighborhood Association**
  
- ◆ **Bob Anderson**
  - **Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, Chair, SOHA Helicopter Noise Committee**
  
- ◆ **John Bailey**
  - **President, Southeast Torrance Homeowners' Association, Inc. and Member, LAX Community Noise Roundtable**
  
- ◆ **Yvonne Bedford**
  - **Representative, Ladera Heights Civic Association**
  
- ◆ **David Garfinkle**
  - **President, Tarzana Property Owners Association**
  
- ◆ **Gerry Hans**
  - **President, Friends of Griffith Park**

# Community Members [2 of 2]

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- ◆ **David Rankell**
  - **Member, Van Nuys Airport Citizens Advisory Council**
  
- ◆ **Richard Root**
  - **Organizer, HelicopterNoise.com and Riviera HOA Board (torrance)**
  
- ◆ **Mike Savidan**
  - **Councilman, City of Lomita CA**
  
- ◆ **Gerald Silver**
  - **President, Homeowners of Encino**
  
- ◆ **Rudy Whitcomb**
  - **Resident, Rolling Hills CA**
  
- ◆ **Wayne Williams**
  - **Member, Van Nuys Airport Citizens Advisory Council**

# **Helicopter Noise Is Obviously A Problem**

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- ◆ **There are more than 2.8 million web sites nationally devoted to helicopter noise complaints**
- ◆ **Eight helicopter noise web sites in Los Angeles County have alone received more than 395,000 visits from people mad enough to respond**
- ◆ **The question is not whether helicopter noise is a problem**
- ◆ **But, what must be done to eliminate the existing helicopter noise problem**
- ◆ **We hope that this is the focus of the FAA's study**

# Critical Helicopter Noise Issues [1 of 3]

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- ◆ **Focus is non-emergency helicopters under FAA control**
  - Media, tour, manufacturer, paparazzi, commuter, real estate, ...
  - Hopefully also guides other helicopters, e.g., military, police, ...
    - In non-emergency situations
- ◆ **Noise and safety are the highest priority issues**
  - Quality of life and public safety are being compromised every day
  - Interference with daily communication and life activities
- ◆ **Low-altitude operation creates serious noise**
  - Mountains and canyons concentrate and focus noise levels
  - Helicopters do not increase altitude over mountains
    - Exacerbates noise levels in mountainous areas
- ◆ **Hovering causes the longest-term disturbances**
  - Often for periods exceeding 30 minutes

# **Critical Helicopter Noise Issues [2 of 3]**

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- ◆ **Early- and late-hour operation is also a big problem**
  - Before 6:00 am and after 9:00 pm
- ◆ **Operation without transponders eliminates tracking**
  - Either not equipped or not turned on
- ◆ **Multiple helicopter operation in single location**
  - Especially media helicopters and private tour operators
- ◆ **Operation in restricted or unacceptable public areas**
  - Hollywood Bowl, Hollywood Sign, Griffith Park
  - Schools, coastlines, ...
- ◆ **No easily visible identification marking**
  - Especially by the public from the ground

# Critical Helicopter Noise Issues [3 of 3]

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- ◆ **Older, lower-technology helicopters are noisier**
  - But are widely flown in residential areas
- ◆ **Separation of helicopters from fixed wing aircraft**
  - Need for separate arrival/departure and transit routes
- ◆ **No centralized, county-wide complaint system**
  - WebTrak: Van Nuys has complaint link, but most unaware of it
  - Most other areas do not have similar system
- ◆ **No compliance or enforcement systems**
  - Easy for operators to get away with blatant violations
  - Flight rules are essential
- ◆ **Detrimental impacts on wildlife**
  - Scientific awareness about noise impacts is beginning to surface and FAA needs to recognize and react in a sensitive way

# Is There An “Acceptable” Noise Level?

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- ◆ **The community does not think so!**
  - Noise is all pervasive
- ◆ **Acoustics industry considers 60 dB noise level to interfere with normal speech**
- ◆ **Helicopter Association International (HAI) says it varies**
  - High 50 dB maximum in low-ambient noise area
  - High 60 dB maximum in high-ambient noise area
- ◆ **Duration must also be considered**
  - 60 dB for 30 seconds is bad enough
  - 60 dB for 30 minutes is simply intolerable
- ◆ **Pilots do not know the noise levels that they create**
  - Only the altitude they fly at and how long they hover



# Is there An “Acceptable” Safety Level?

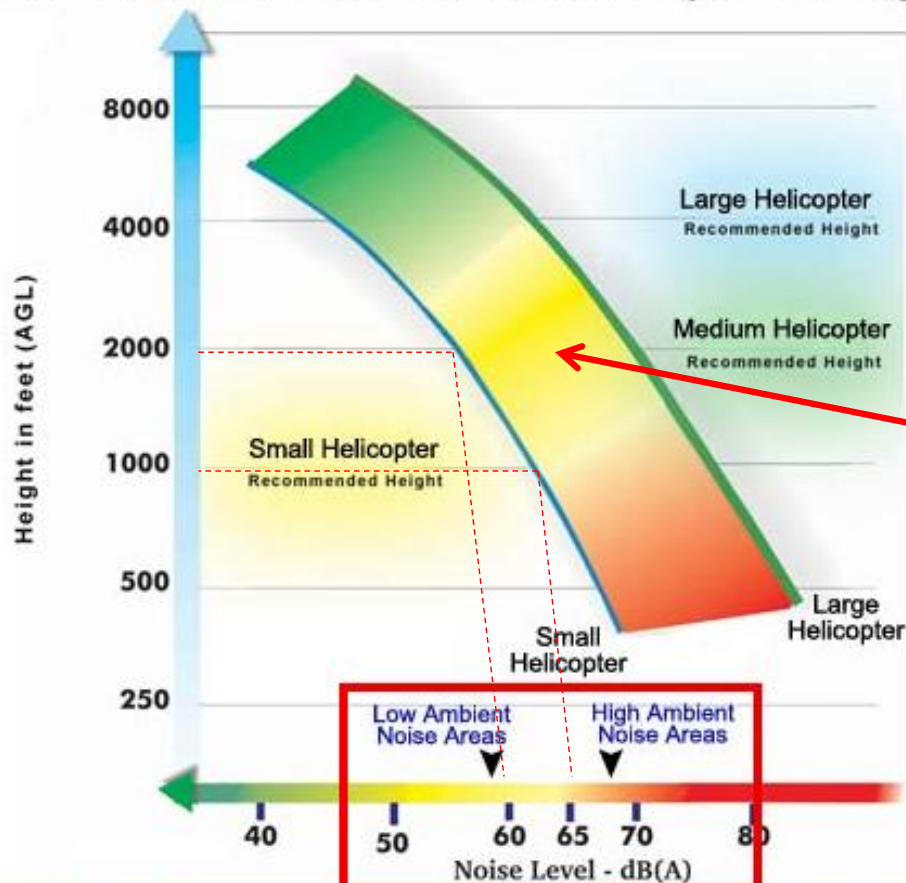
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- ◆ Again, the community does not think so!
- ◆ There have been recent helicopter accidents
- ◆ There is always the possibility of brush fires
- ◆ Lower altitudes reduce the ability to safely autorotate

# We Don't Accept Fly Neighborly Guidelines



#### Variation of Noise Levels with Flyover Height



The Fly Higher chart illustrates the relationship between distance and noise.

- The "acceptable" noise level differs between low and high ambient noise environments.

#### Comments:

**HAI chart skewed. Per HAI:**

65 dB = Not less than 1000'

60 dB = Not less than 2000'

**Also, our tests showed different results:**

65 dB Requires above 1500'

60 dB Requires above 2500'

**HAI favors helicopter industry**

# Congress Agrees There Is a Noise Problem

## Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 14, 2012

Mr. Michael P. Huerta  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

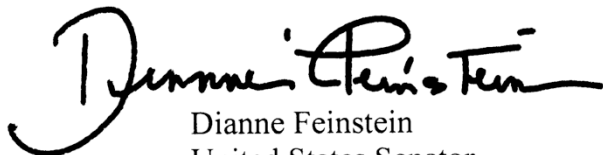
Dear Acting Administrator Huerta:

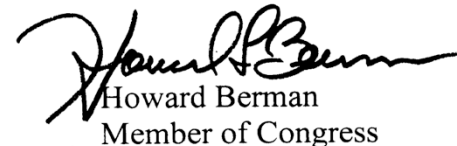


As you know, we have asked the FAA to develop a set of regulations that relieve residents of the often excessive noise and better protect the public in emergency situations. We thank you for directing the FAA Western Pacific Regional Office to begin this process. Regional Administrator Withycombe's recent commitment, at a public meeting, to evaluate a full set of options by next summer to address the risks and concerns raised by helicopters in the region is very encouraging. We hope you will continue to prioritize this matter in order to ensure that the region's report is completed on time.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

  
Howard Berman  
Member of Congress

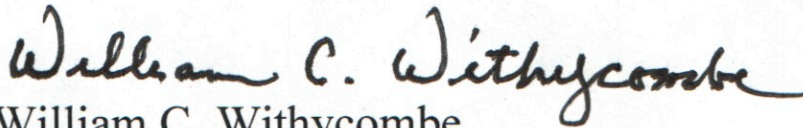
# FAA Agrees There Is a Noise Problem

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## ◆ In a letter to George Abrahams on August 31, 2012:

Thank you for the useful information. I agree that measures to address the issues related to helicopter noise in residential areas of Los Angeles must be developed.

Sincerely,



William C. Withycombe  
Regional Administrator

# **Examples of Helicopter Issues**

# Low-Flying Helicopter in Palos Verdes

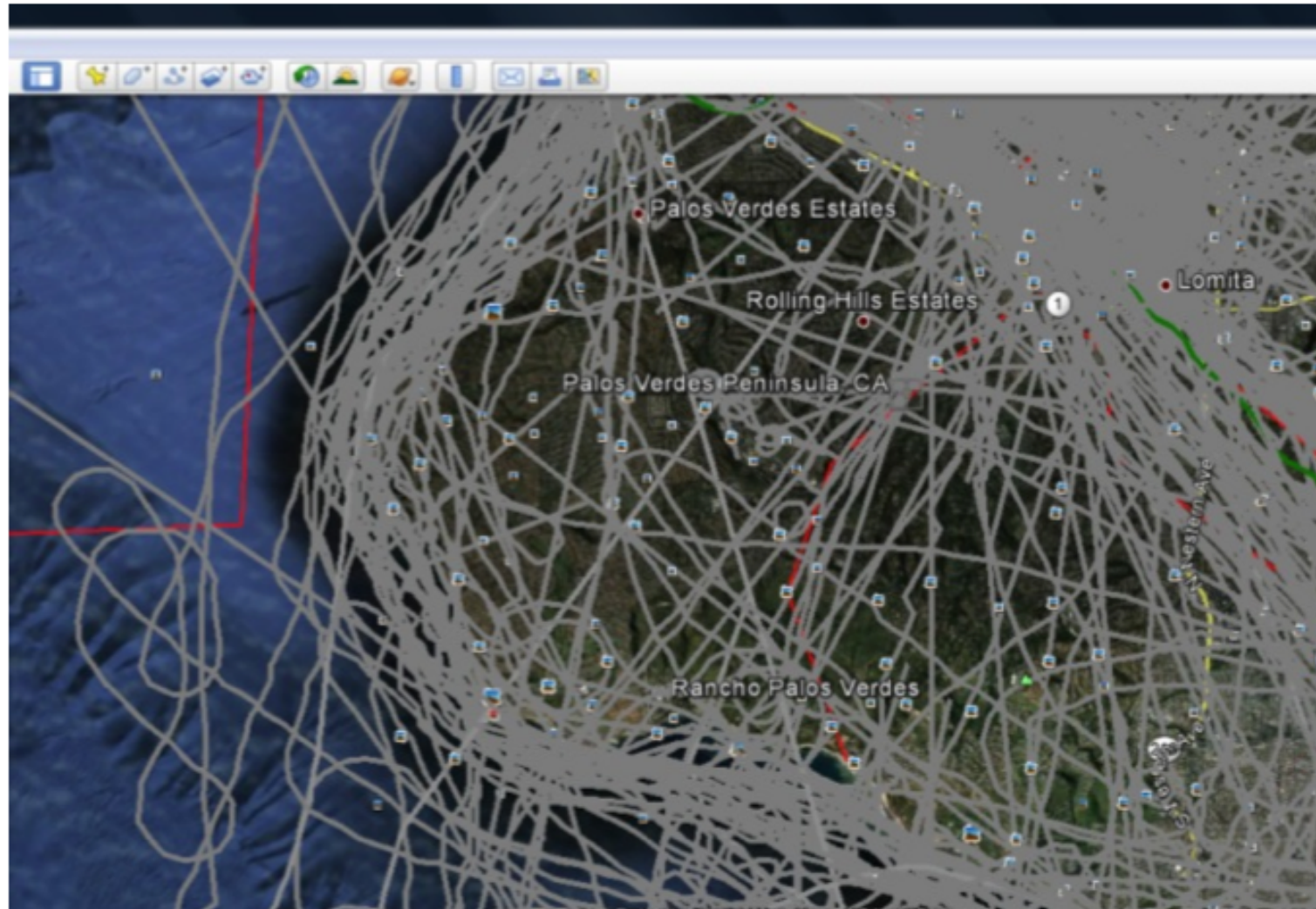
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Photo taken on July 31, 2012 by Palos Verdes resident from home located at 135-foot altitude. Note the helicopter is almost at eye level.



# Excessive Flights on Coastline

FLIGHT TRACKS ON PV PENINSULA COASTLINE  
FLIGHTS BELOW 2500 FEET - JULY 11, 2008  
(DATA PROVIDED BY FAA)



# Helicopter Over Griffith Park Observatory

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# Helicopter Volumes at Van Nuys Airport

Harris Miller Miller & Hanson study, January 14, 2009

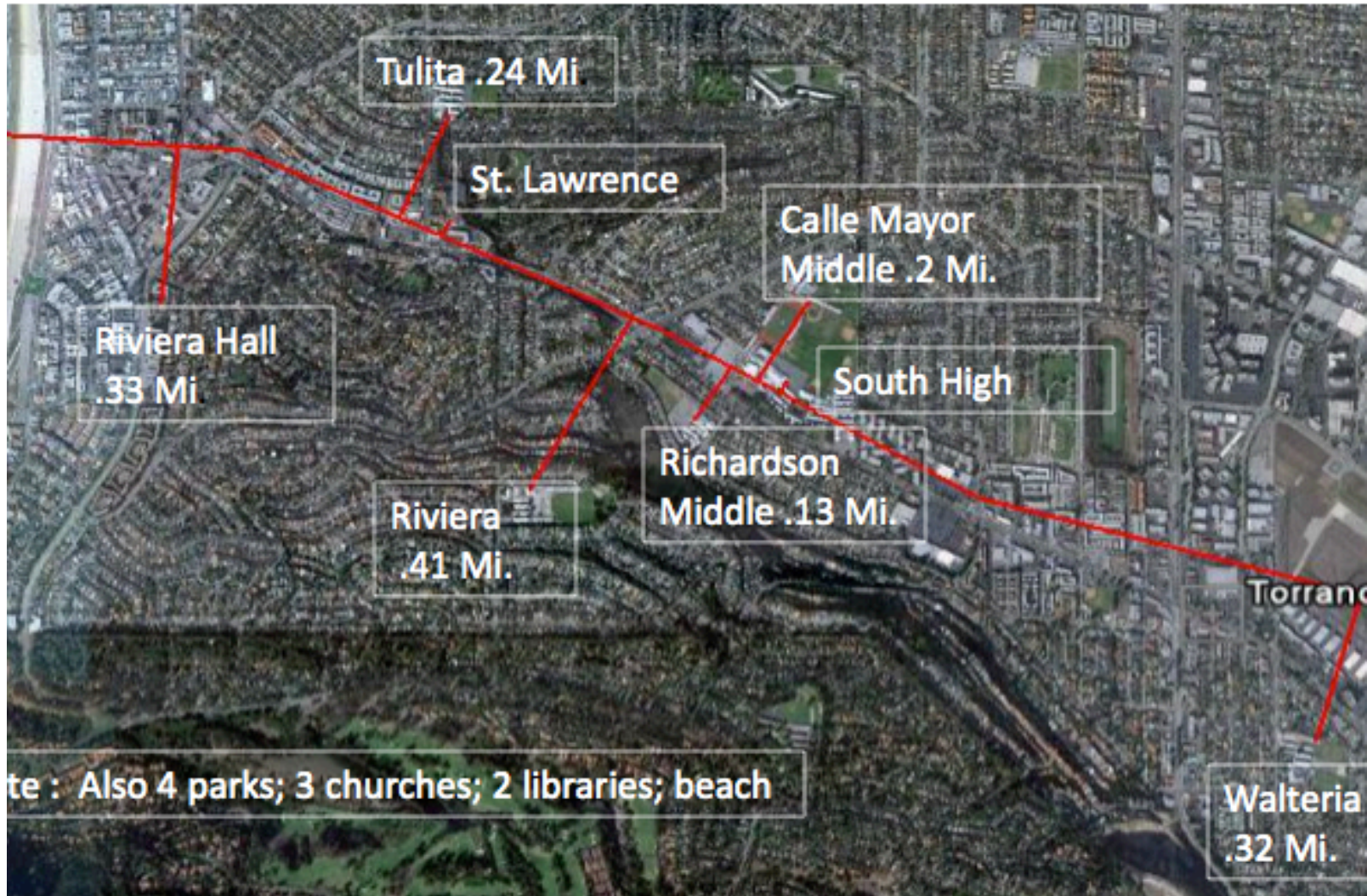
## VNY helicopters and operations

- 52 based helicopters
- Bell 47, Robinson R22, Bell 412, Aerospatiale AS350
- Public service, media, training, etc.
- Approximately 70,000 annual helicopter operations

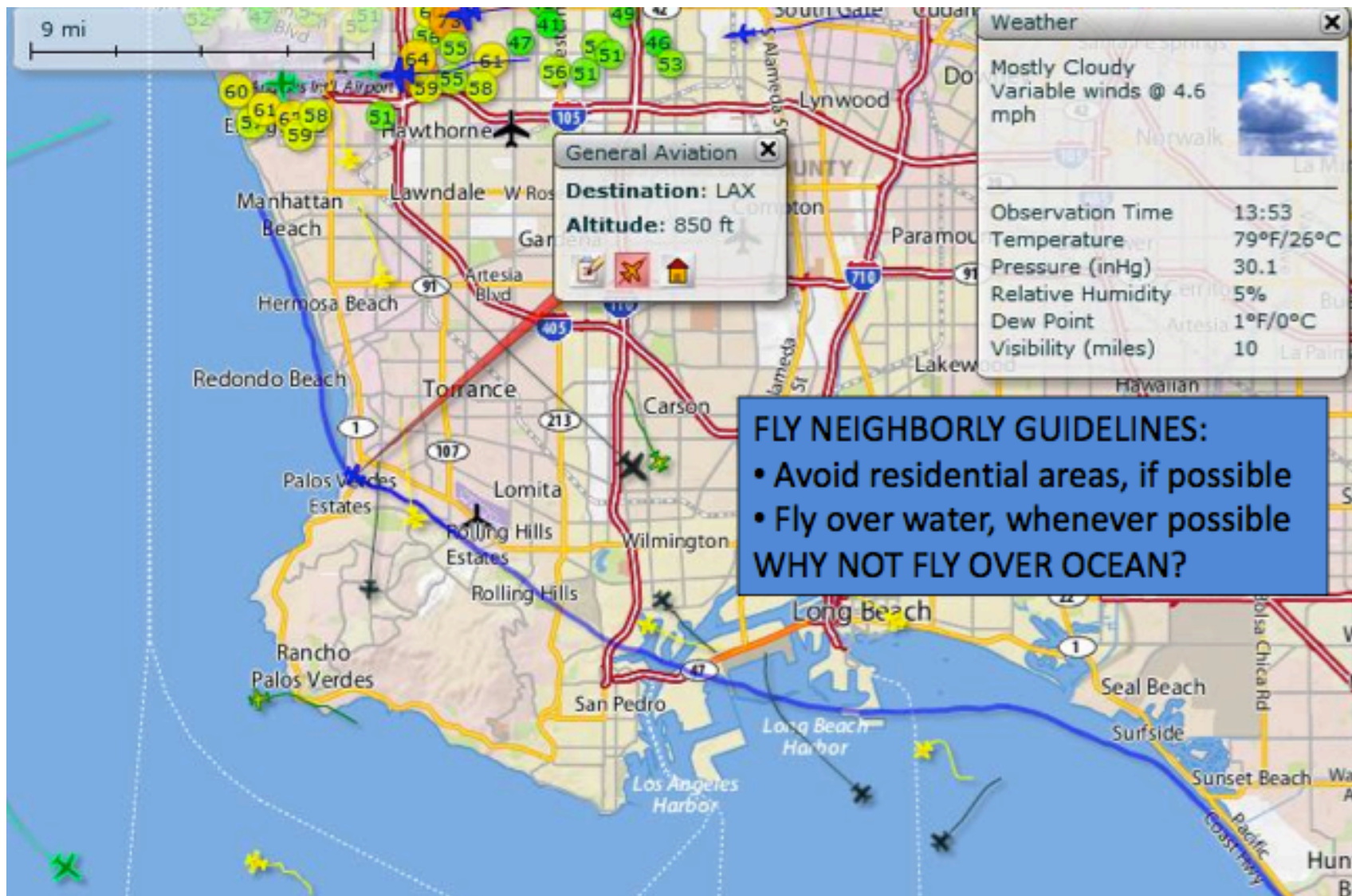
	Helicopter Operations	Helicopter Overflights	Total Helicopter Activity
2004	52,200	16,900	69,100
2009	68,200	22,100	90,300
2014	82,200	26,700	108,900

# Adverse Impacts on Schools

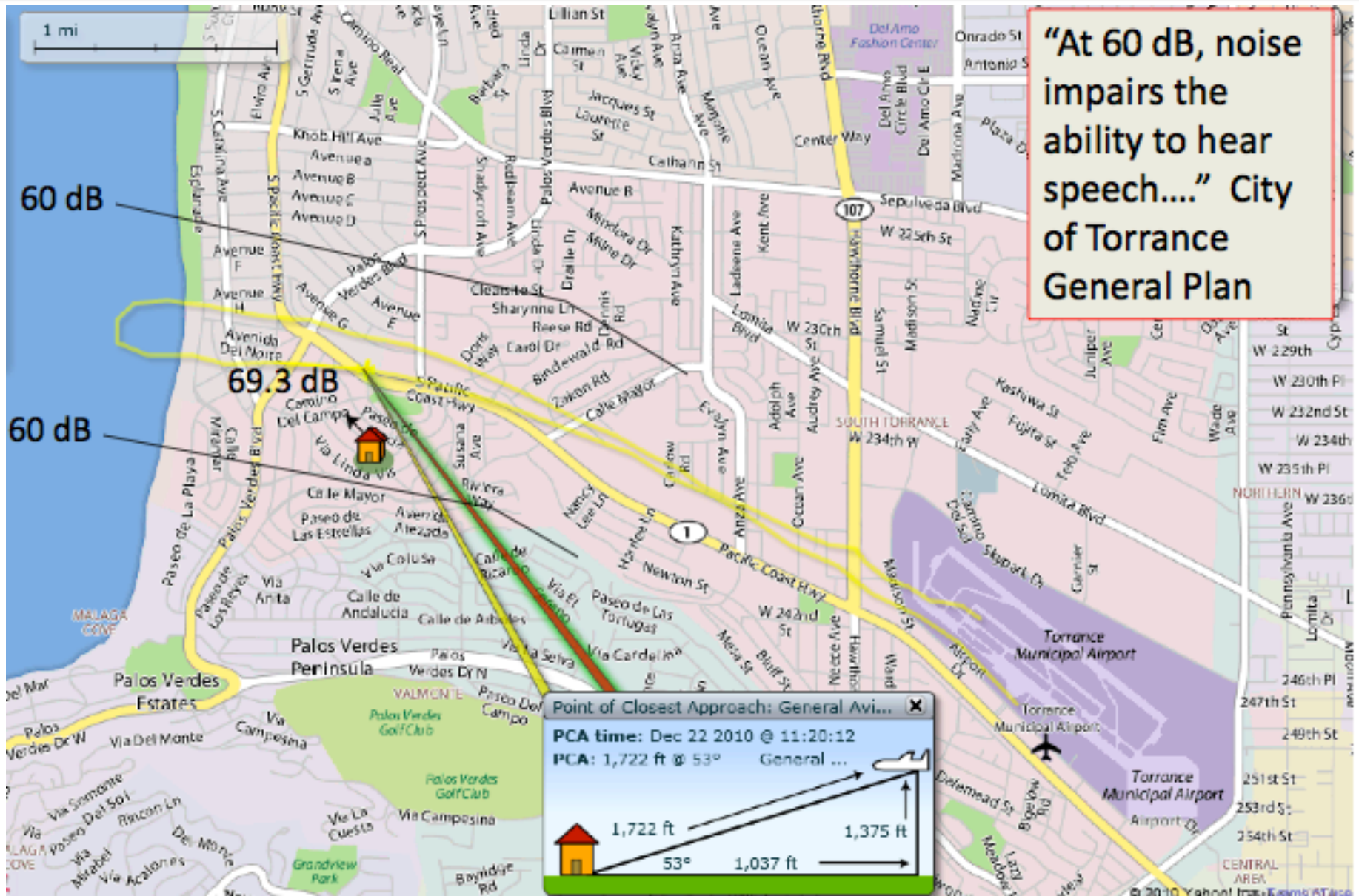
Eight South Bay schools within one-half mile of West PCH route



# Transit Through Torrance Airspace to LAX



# Robinson Helicopter Company Test Flights



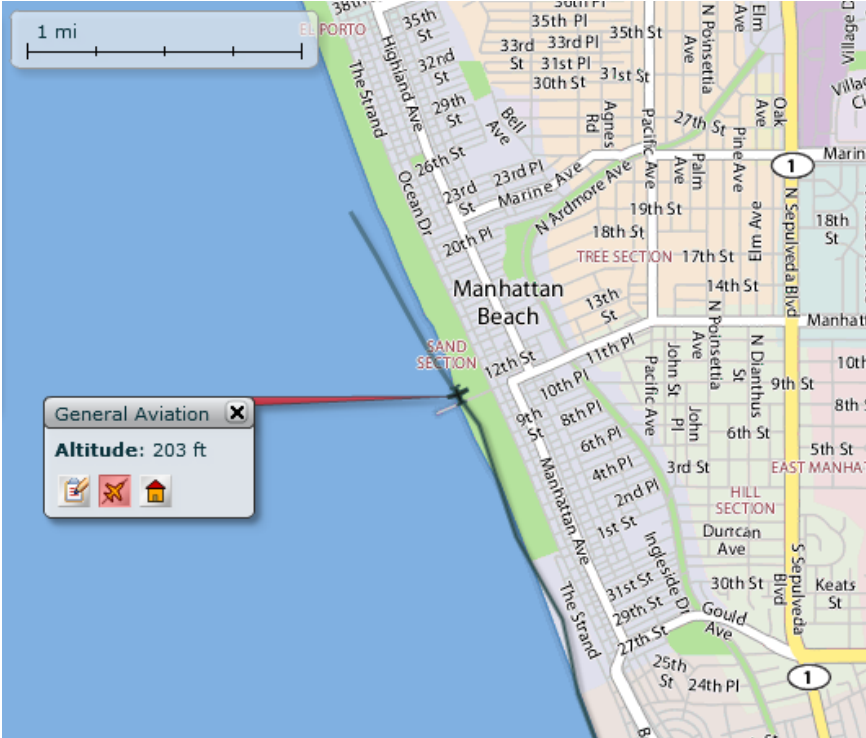
# Video-Audio Example of Helicopter Noise

To Play – Move mouse over image and click 

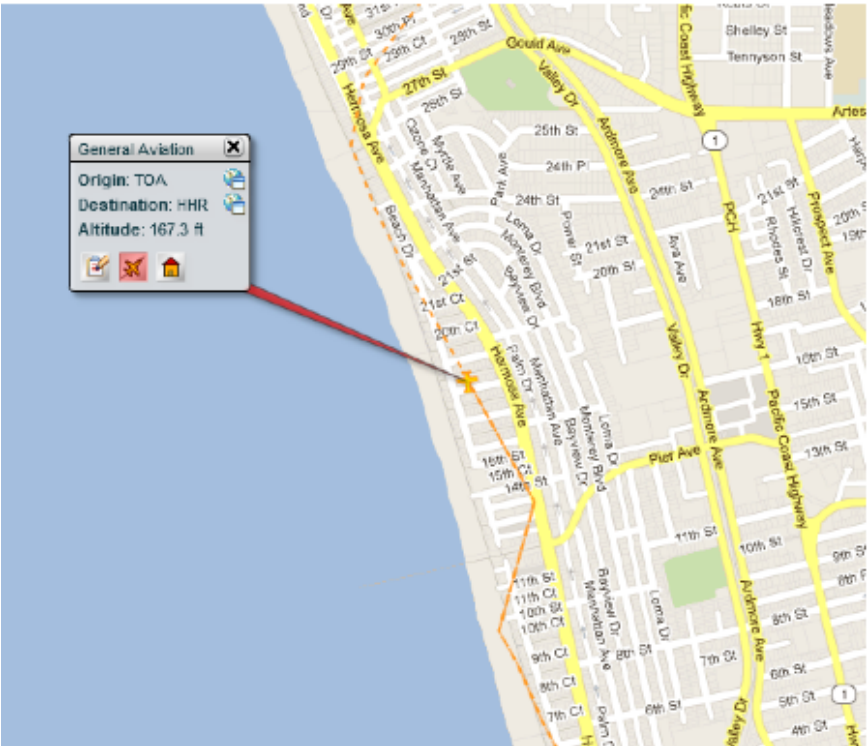


# Flying Beyond the Surf Line

203 feet above Manhattan Beach Pier



167 feet above Hermosa Beach



# Sightseeing Tours Along the Beach

SIGHTSEEING TOURS  
RANKED

# BEST

OF LOS ANGELES



beach  
**cities**  
flight  
**\$159**



Experience Being A Pilot. Fly in the front seat and maneuver the aircraft while seeing 360 degree views in our R-44.

# Sightseeing Tours At the Hollywood Sign

## Star Helicopters – Hawthorne Municipal Airport

Helicopter Tour for Two or Three (Half Off)

from  
**\$199**

**Buy!**



Value	Discount	You Save
<b>\$398</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>\$199</b>



**Buy it for a friend!**



Limited Time Only!

**Over 110 bought**  
Limited quantity available



**The deal is on!**



Once in a Lifetime



# **Recommendations For Discussion**

# Recommendations For Discussion [1 of 4]

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- ◆ **Set minimum altitude limits**
  - Increase all helicopter transit altitudes to 2,500 feet above ground level within cities and populated areas county-wide
  - Applies to flying, hovering, and circling
  
- ◆ **Limit hover time at a specific geographic position**
  - One minute (or less) at any specific position
  - One mile minimum between consecutive hover positions
  
- ◆ **Restrict number of helicopter flights per day**
  - Especially restrict daily helicopter manufacturer test flights and flight times from any specific airport
  
- ◆ **Require media and other helicopter pooling**
  - To the absolute maximum extent possible

# Recommendations For Discussion [2 of 4]

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- ◆ **Establish restricted/special “no fly” areas and routes**
  - Define such areas across Los Angeles County
  - Establish transit routes along the ocean one mile offshore
- ◆ **Restrict flight hours to minimize residential impacts**
  - Curfew helicopter flights from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am
  - Applies to all non-emergency helicopter operation
- ◆ **Phase-out Stage 2 helicopters over 3 to 5 years**
  - Switch to quieter NoTar and other technologies
  - With tax credits and other incentives
- ◆ **Require easy-to-see markings on all helicopters**
  - Improved tail N number size visibility for ground observers
  - Allows public to help identify noisemakers

# Recommendations For Discussion [3 of 4]

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- ◆ **Require transponder installation and use at all times**
  - So FAA can track all helicopter operations
- ◆ **Reevaluate freeways as preferred helicopter routes**
  - With special attention to environmental and safety concerns
- ◆ **Remove all residential arrival and departure routes**
  - For helicopters at all Los Angeles County airports
- ◆ **Establish new rules to disperse helicopter routing**
  - At all airports in Los Angeles County
- ◆ **Improve safety controls**
  - More controller assistance
  - Collision avoidance systems

# Recommendations For Discussion [4 of 4]

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- ◆ **Establish Special Flight Aviation Regulations (SFARs)**
  - Similar to Hawaii's SFAR
  - For entirety of Los Angeles County
- ◆ **Establish a centralized complaint system**
  - Integrated across Los Angeles County
  - Provide strong outreach so public can and will use it
- ◆ **Establish compliance and enforcement system**
  - For all helicopter operations
  - With significant penalties

# **Questions and Data Requests**

# Questions and Data Requests [1 of 3]

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- ◆ **What is the status of the Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) Helicopter Noise Model study?**
- ◆ **What effect will the FAA's proposed Stage 3 helicopter noise standards for new helicopter designs have on the current Stage 2 helicopter fleet? When will it be implemented?**
- ◆ **Were any environmental impact studies done prior to establishing any transit or arrival/departure routes in Los Angeles? If so, what were the conclusions? If not, why not?**
- ◆ **How did the FAA arrive at 2,000 feet as the recommended altitude for all aircraft in Advisory Circular 91-36D?**

# Questions and Data Requests [2 of 3]

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- ◆ Does the FAA have any independent studies that show the relationship between helicopter altitude and noise on the ground? What do they show?
- ◆ Does the FAA have a position on what level of noise is acceptable for helicopters in transit over noise-sensitive areas?
- ◆ Will the new NextGen system of air traffic management have any features that will help enable helicopter pilots to fly at higher altitudes?
- ◆ What other avenues do residents/stakeholders have should new enforcement rules not be enacted as a result the ongoing helicopter noise study?



# Questions and Data Requests [3 of 3]

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- ◆ Please provide us with the following data to help us fully understand the helicopter noise problem
  - How many helicopter flights were there over Los Angeles County in 2011 and the first ten months of 2012?
  - At what altitude were those flights?
  - What was the noise level on the ground from those flights?
- ◆ When can this data be available?
  - Will there be any limitations on the data?

**Please provide responses to Bob Anderson  
at  
BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com**

# In Summary

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- ◆ For 30 years, the HAI has been “talking the talk” about flying neighborly
- ◆ It obviously hasn’t worked or hundreds of residents would not have attended the *Public Hearing on Helicopter Noise in Los Angeles*
  - Held in Sherman Oaks on August 6, 2012
- ◆ Most flights exceed HAI noise level criteria
  - Almost all exceed 60 dB acoustics industry threshold for speech interference
- ◆ It is up to the FAA to implement written regulations to fix the noise problems

# Thank You For Holding This Meeting

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- ◆ **FAA commitment to the next steps is critical!**
- ◆ **FAA to develop a permanent Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) that establishes minimum elevation and other rules necessary to reduce helicopter noise by issuing a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM)**
- ◆ **FAA to continue working with our community group during development of the FAR**
- ◆ **Formal adoption of the FAR**
- ◆ **FAA to continue working with our community group after adoption of the FAR**