



Date: June 17, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Patrick Q. Sullivan, City Attorney

By: Jessica Corona, Law Office Administrator | JCorona@TorranceCA.gov

Subject: City Attorney – Discuss and Consider Adopting an **ORDINANCE** Amending the Torrance Municipal Code Regulating Touch (and Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back, and Low Approaches at the Torrance Municipal Airport and Adopt California Environmental Quality Act Exemption. Expenditure: None.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the City Attorney that City Council:

1. Discuss and consider amending the Torrance Municipal Airport (Airport) Ordinance to regulate touch (and stop) and go, full stop-taxi back, and low approaches at the Airport; and
2. Adopt an **ORDINANCE** amending Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) Article 5 “Touch (and Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back and Low Approaches” of Chapter 1, Division 5; and
3. Adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions pursuant to Sections 15378 and 15061(b)(3) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CEQA Guidelines); and
4. Approve an Ordinance Summary for publication.

FUNDING

None required.

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

In July 1990, the City adopted Ordinance No. 3307 amending the TMC to regulate touch (and stop) and go landings, taxi-backs, and low approaches as follows:

- Prohibited 8:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m., Monday - Friday (taxi-backs prohibited from 10:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m.); and
- Prohibited 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 a.m., Saturday; and
- Prohibited Sundays and holidays.

Ordinance No. 3307 was adopted before the grandfathering date of October 1, 1990 of the Airport Noise and Capacity Act (ANCA) of 1990.

Due to the stark increase in noise and safety concerns, in February 2024, the city adopted Ordinance No. 3930 amending the TMC to prohibit touch (and stop) and go landings entirely and restrict taxi backs and low approaches to 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday, and all City observed holidays.

On April 22, 2024, a group filed a petition for writ of mandate, challenging Ordinance No. 3930. The City answered the petition and disputed all material claims presented. The federal court ordered the parties to attend a “mandatory settlement conference” presided by a magistrate judge, and to engage in good faith settlement discussions. As a result of the court-mandated settlement conference, the parties reached a conditional settlement, thereby avoiding the risk and cost of litigation, and City Council directed staff to provide the proposed amendment to the TMC that would regulate touch (and stop) and go landings, full stop-taxi backs, and low approaches at the Airport consistent with Council direction, and bring the proposed amendments for City Council consideration and possible approval and adoption.

Based on City Council direction, the attached proposed ordinance would amend the TMC to restrict touch (and stop) and go landings, taxi backs, and low approaches to 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday, and 11:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Saturday, and prohibit such operations entirely on Sundays and all City observed holidays.

ANALYSIS

The City is the owner and operator of the Airport. In 1956, the United States conveyed the airport site to the City without any conditions or restrictions (except for a license to explore and excavate fissionable materials). The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) acknowledges that because the City has not received any federal funds for the airport since 1988, the City is not obligated under any FAA grant assurances, or deed covenant or condition, concerning the City’s operation of the Airport.

In the last several years, the noise from the touch and go, full stop-taxi back, and low approach operations has increased dramatically, disturbing the densely populated residential neighborhoods surrounding the Airport. Such operations also present safety and quality of life concerns for the City’s residents. The City also recognizes the importance of the Airport and the benefits from its operation to the City, its residents, and surrounding communities. The facts supporting the City’s statements is reflected in the administrative record that the City certified in connection with the above-referenced legal action.

The proposed amendment is a restriction, as opposed to a ban, on touch (and stop) and go landing, taxi back, and low approach operations at the Airport. The restriction is reasonable as it allows such operations to take place at the Airport for the benefit of pilots while allowing City residents to enjoy some quiet hours in the morning, evening, at night, and all day on Sundays and holidays. In that respect, the proposed restriction mirrors Ordinance No. 3307, adopted in 1990 and grandfathered under ANCA. As such, the proposed amendment satisfies all applicable federal law requirements.

While avoiding costly litigation, the proposed amendment will provide enhanced safety and reduce the residents’ exposure to aircraft noise, both of which are appropriate local interests. The proposed amendment does not discriminate against any Airport users and will be enforced in a non-arbitrary manner.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

The proposed ordinance was reviewed pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed ordinance is exempt from CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, because the activity undertaken involves general text amendments to the TMC that would not cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment; as such, the proposed ordinance does not meet the definition of a "Project" under CEQA. The proposed ordinance is also exempt from CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the ordinance may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed ordinance would make pre-existing public nuisance regulations more robust and protective of neighboring communities.

CONCLUSION

The City Attorney recommends that City Council discuss, consider, and adopt an amendment to the TMC regulating touch (and stop) and go, full stop-taxi back and low approaches at the Airport, adopt a CEQA exemption, Adopt an ordinance amending Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) Article 5 "Touch (and Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back and Low Approaches" of Chapter 1, Division 5, adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions pursuant to Sections 15378 and 15061(b)(3) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CEQA Guidelines) and approve an Ordinance Summary for publication.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Ordinance (Clean Copy)
- 2) Ordinance (Redline Copy)
- 3) Ordinance Summary

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING ARTICLE 5 OF CHAPTER 1,
DIVISION 5 OF THE TORRANCE MUNICIPAL CODE REGARDING
TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, FULL STOP-TAXI BACK AND LOW
APPROACHES**

**THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS
FOLLOWS:**

SECTION 1

That Article 5 of Chapter 1, Division 5 of the Torrance Municipal Code entitled “Touch (and Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back and Low Approaches” is amended in its entirety to read as follows:

**“ARTICLE 5 - TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, FULL STOP-TAXI BACK AND LOW
APPROACHES**

51.5.1 TOUCH AND GO DEFINED.

For purposes of this Article, a touch and go operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing and departure on a runway without stopping or exiting the runway.

51.5.2 STOP AND GO DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a stop and go operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing followed by a complete stop on the runway and a takeoff from that point.

51.5.3 FULL STOP-TAXI BACK DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a full stop-taxi back operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing on any runway followed by exiting the runway, with or without a complete stop, and returning directly to the approach end of any runway for a subsequent take-off.

51.5.4 LOW APPROACH DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a low approach shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of an approach less than 500 feet above the Airport whereby the pilot intentionally does not make contact with the runway.

**51.5.5 TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, LOW APPROACH, AND FULL STOP-TAXI
BACK OPERATIONS**

Touch (and stop) and go, low approach, and full stop-taxi back operations shall be permitted on the Airport during the below hours, only:

Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

51.5.6 PROHIBITED OPERATIONS ON WEEKDAYS

No touch (and stop) and go, low approach or full stop taxi back shall be permitted on the Airport between 5:01 p.m. of one day and 8:59 a.m. of the following day, Monday through Friday inclusive, and between 5:01 p.m. on Friday and 10:59 a.m. on Saturday.

51.5.7 PROHIBITED OPERATION ON SUNDAYS AND CITY OBSERVED HOLIDAYS

No touch (and stop) and go, low approach, or full stop taxi back shall be permitted on the Airport between 2:31 p.m. Saturday and 8:59 a.m. Monday, nor any City observed holiday.

51.5.8 EMERGENCY EXEMPTION

An aircraft shall be exempt from the provisions of Section 51.5.6 and 51.5.7 if, in the reasonable opinion of the City Manager or his designee(s), a bona fide emergency, go around, or missed approach exists which requires a low approach operation for the preservation of life or property; provided, however, that such aircraft in its departure shall not exceed the noise levels set forth in Section 46.8.8."

SECTION 2

Any provisions of the Municipal Code or its appendices, or any other ordinances of the City of Torrance inconsistent with this ordinance to the extent of the inconsistencies and no further, are repealed.

SECTION 3

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason deemed or held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision will not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The City Council of the City of Torrance hereby declares that it would have adopted this ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, phrases or other portions might subsequently be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

SECTION 4

This Ordinance was reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq., "CEQA") and the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regulations §§15000, et seq., the "CEQA Guidelines"). This Ordinance is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, because the activity undertaken involves general text amendments to the Torrance Municipal Code that would not cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, as such, the Ordinance does not meet the definition of a "Project" under CEQA. The Ordinance is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the Ordinance may have a significant effect on the

environment. The Ordinance would make pre-existing public nuisance regulations more robust and protective of neighboring communities.

SECTION 5

This ordinance will take effect thirty days after the date of its adoption. Within fifteen days following adoption, this ordinance or a summary of this ordinance, if authorized by the City Council, will be published at least once in the Daily Breeze, a newspaper of general circulation, published and circulated in the City of Torrance.

INTRODUCED and **APPROVED** this _____ day _____ 2025.

ADOPTED and **PASSED** this _____ day of _____ 2025.

Mayor George Chen

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
PATRICK Q. SULLIVAN, City Attorney

ATTEST:

By: _____
Tatia Y. Strader, Assistant City Attorney

Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING ARTICLE 5 OF CHAPTER 1, DIVISION 5 OF THE TORRANCE MUNICIPAL CODE REGARDING TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, FULL STOP-TAXI BACK AND LOW APPROACHES

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1

That Article 5 of Chapter 1, Division 5 of the Torrance Municipal Code entitled “Touch (and Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back and Low Approaches” is amended in its entirety to read as follows:

“ARTICLE 5 - TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, FULL STOP-TAXI BACK AND LOW APPROACHES

51.5.1 TOUCH AND GO DEFINED.

For purposes of this Article, a touch and go operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing and departure on a runway without stopping or exiting the runway.

51.5.2 STOP AND GO DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a stop and go operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing followed by a complete stop on the runway and a takeoff from that point.

51.5.3 FULL STOP-TAXI BACK DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a full stop-taxi back operation shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of a landing on any runway followed by exiting the runway, with or without a complete stop, and returning directly to the approach end of any runway for a subsequent take-off.

51.5.4 LOW APPROACH DEFINED

For purposes of this Article, a low approach shall mean an action by an aircraft consisting of an approach less than 500 feet above the Airport whereby the pilot intentionally does not make contact with the runway.

51.5.5 TOUCH (AND STOP) AND GO, LOW APPROACH, AND FULL STOP-TAXI BACK OPERATIONS

Touch (and ~~s~~Stop) and go, low approach, and full stop-taxi back operations shall be permitted on the Airport during the below hours, only:

Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

51.5.6 PROHIBITED OPERATIONS ON WEEKDAYS

No touch (and stop) and go, low approach or full stop taxi back shall be permitted on the Airport between 5:01 p.m. of one day and 8:59 a.m. of the following day, Monday through Friday inclusive, and between 5:01 p.m. on Friday and 10:59 a.m. on Saturday.

51.5.7 PROHIBITED OPERATION ON SUNDAYS AND CITY OBSERVED HOLIDAYS

No touch (and stop) and go, low approach, or full stop taxi back shall be permitted on the Airport between 2:31 p.m. Saturday and 8:59 a.m. Monday, nor any City observed holiday.

51.5.8 EMERGENCY EXEMPTION

An aircraft shall be exempt from the provisions of Section 51.5.6 and 51.5.7 if, in the reasonable opinion of the City Manager or his designee(s), a bona fide emergency, go around, or missed approach exists which requires a ~~touch (and stop) and go or~~ low approach operation for the preservation of life or property; provided, however, that such aircraft in its departure shall not exceed the noise levels set forth in Section 46.8.8."

SECTION 2

Any provisions of the Municipal Code or its appendices, or any other ordinances of the City of Torrance inconsistent with this ordinance to the extent of the inconsistencies and no further, are repealed.

SECTION 3

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason deemed or held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision will not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The City Council of the City of Torrance hereby declares that it would have adopted this ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, phrases or other portions might subsequently be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

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This Ordinance was reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq., "CEQA") and the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regulations §§15000, et seq., the "CEQA Guidelines"). This Ordinance is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, because the activity undertaken involves general text amendments to the Torrance Municipal Code that would not cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, as such, the Ordinance does not meet the definition of a "Project" under CEQA. The Ordinance is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the Ordinance may have a significant effect on the

environment. The Ordinance would make pre-existing public nuisance regulations more robust and protective of neighboring communities.

SECTION 5

This ordinance will take effect thirty days after the date of its adoption. Within fifteen days following adoption, this ordinance or a summary of this ordinance, if authorized by the City Council, will be published at least once in the Daily Breeze, a newspaper of general circulation, published and circulated in the City of Torrance.

INTRODUCED and **APPROVED** this _____ day _____ 2025.

ADOPTED and **PASSED** this _____ day of _____ 2025.

Mayor George Chen

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
PATRICK Q. SULLIVAN, City Attorney

ATTEST:

By: _____
Tatia Y. Strader, Assistant City Attorney

Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk

ORDINANCE SUMMARY

On _____, the City Council of the City of Torrance adopted Ordinance No. _____, amending Article 5 of Chapter 1, Division 5 of the Torrance Municipal Code regarding Touch (And Stop) and Go, Full Stop-Taxi Back and Low Approaches. The Ordinance will take effect 30 days after the adoption date. The following is a summary of Ordinance No. _____.

Amendment to the Torrance Municipal Code:

Ordinance No. _____ would amend Article 5 of Chapter 1, Division 5 of the Torrance Municipal Code to regulate touch (and stop) and go, full stop-taxi back, and low approaches on the Torrance Municipal Airport (Airport).

Specifically, the amendment would permit touch (and stop) and go, low approach or full stop taxi back operations on the Airport during the below hours. The only exception is on Sundays and City observed holidays, when none of the listed operations would be allowed.

Monday through Friday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday	11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Additionally, the amendment contains a low approach restriction exemption for a bona fide emergency, go around, or missed approach. An aircraft may conduct a low approach during the restricted hours in the case of a bona fide emergency, go around, or missed approach, when needed for the preservation of life or property in the reasonable opinion of the City Manager; provided, however, that such departure aircraft may not exceed the noise levels set forth in Torrance Municipal Code Section 46.8.8.

Passed and Adopted the _____ day of _____ 2025, by the following vote:

Ayes:
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

The full text of Ordinance No. _____ is available for inspection during regular business hours at the City Clerk's Office (3031 Torrance Boulevard, Torrance, California 90503) Monday through Friday with alternating closed Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or at <https://www.torranceca.gov/government/city-clerk>.