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Media Contact:
Donna Maurillo
Mineta Transportation Institute
408-924-7561 OR 831-234-4009 mobile

MEDIA ADVISORY

Mineta Transportation Institute Study Examines How "Smart Growth" Principles Can Be Applied around Airport

The report is among the first to use experience at specific airport to address land use compatibility issues between airports and local communities.

San Jose, CA, April 8, 2009 – Researchers at the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) completed a scientific study about the extent to which principles and strategies of smart growth have been applied in land use planning around airports in California. It also examines whether "smart growth" has been effective with existing airport land use compatibility planning in the state. The report, *Applying Smart Growth Principles and Strategies to Resolving Land Use Conflicts around Airports*, is believed to be the first formal examination of this issue by studying experiences at specific airports.

"Thus far, planners have given little consideration to how smart growth principles and strategies should be addressed in land uses surrounding airports," said Dr. Richard W. Lee, principal investigator on the project. "However, there is an urgent need to rectify this situation. The literature on smart growth and airport land use planning is only beginning to intersect, but useful lessons can be drawn from that material."

The research proposes that applying smart-growth principles and strategies can reduce potential conflicts around airports. The study entailed a literature review, interviews with airport and planning agency staff and others involved in airport land use planning, and detailed case studies of 14 California airports.

Based on the research, investigators made nine recommendations, including:

- Caltrans Division of Aeronautics should ensure adequate funding, staffing and training for anyone charged with land use planning around airports;
- Airport Land Use Commissions should be encouraged and given incentives to better disseminate their policies and decisions;
- They also should track and report changes in land use within Airport Influence Areas annually:
- Caltrans Division of Aeronautics should coordinate with relevant state agencies to develop explicit guidelines that address smart growth planning in airport vicinities.

For example, housing is viewed as incompatible with many areas near airports, particularly near runway ends or under aircraft flight paths. The densities and mixed uses associated with walkable neighborhoods may be incompatible with noise and safety issues in areas close to airports. However, not all areas around airports are equally affected by aircraft noise or safety. Smart growth strategies can address housing development, which can be built away from aircraft flight paths, and land use adjacent to the airport, which can be planned for more compatible purposes.

Dr. Lee said, "Airports tend to attract a wide variety of related land uses in their immediate environs, but planners can try to preserve open space or agricultural uses in areas adjacent to runway ends. Originally, airports often were located away from existing communities, but they subsequently became magnets for development in the surrounding area. If we direct this development, particularly housing, toward existing communities farther from the airport, it would be more consistent with principles of smart growth and airport land use compatibility planning."

Also, developing livable residential areas that draw their economic base from businesses associated with the airport can help create a beneficial relationship between airports and surrounding communities. This can help minimize tensions between the entities.

Other research associates for the report include Geoffrey D. Gosling, Ph.D., Earl Bossard, Ph.D. AICP, and Katja Irvin.

Download the report from MTI's site at www.transweb.sjsu.edu Click on "Research" and then "Publications." There is no fee.

ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Richard W. Lee, Ph.D., AICP, has been a research associate with MTI for more than 10 years. He has led MTI studies of general plans and sustainability and of sustainability indicators for transportation. He is also a senior transportation planner with Fehr & Peers in Walnut Creek, Calif. He has more than 20 years' experience as a transportation consultant and academic, managing regional transportation plans, general plan studies, high-speed rail and transit projects, smart growth transportation studies, and a variety of transportation studies. Dr. Lee earned his masters degrees in civil engineering (1984) and city and regional planning (1985) and his Ph.D. in city and regional planning (1995) from the University of California, Berkeley. He has taught transportation planning and conducted transportation research projects at several universities.

ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE:

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and was reauthorized in 1998. The institute is funded by Congress through the US DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and by other public and private grants and donations. The US DOT selected MTI as a national "Center of Excellence" following a 2002 competition.

The Institute has a Board of Trustees whose internationally-respected members represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI's focus on policy and management resulted from a board assessment of the industry's unmet needs and led directly to choosing the San José State University College of Business as the Institute's home. MTI conducts research, education, and information and technology transfer focusing on transportation policy and management topics and issues. Visit www.transweb.sjsu.edu

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