

Airport completes work on noise study

By NEIL YOUNG The Daily News | Posted: Wednesday, February 10, 2016 12:45 am

BULLHEAD CITY — The Federal Aviation Administration has approved the Noise Compatibility Program for Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport. The purpose is to protect the airport from encroachment of residential housing that — unchecked — could force the airport to close or relocate.

“Essentially, it discusses some zoning, it has some recommendations,” said Jeremy Keating, airport director. He said the noise study addresses airport property and property that is nearby. The noise study “does not take into account overflights of the areas or flight (paths),” Keating said.

“The recommendations are to get with Bullhead City to make sure that there’s proper zoning ordinances in place so that people don’t encroach on the airport and that there’s proper uses, that we don’t build houses off the approach of the runway,” he said. The FAA report recommends that the city “adopt an airport compatibility checklist for discretionary review of projects within the vicinity of the airport.”

The report lists land use that is compatible to the airport: commercial, industrial and open space.

The timing of the report is perfect, since the city is tweaking its General Plan, which will go before voters in the Aug. 30 primary. “It actually couldn’t have come at a better time because there were some recommendations to add a noise map that the state puts out for Realtors that’s required by state law,” Keating said. “We had a really old plan so ... any time the traffic changes or the type of aircraft that come in and out changes, it’s time to do a new one and the FAA kind of likes you do them every five to 10 years,” he said.

“There was quite a bit of talk of development around the airport,” and the new plan permits the airport “to go to developers and say, ‘Look, we have a current plan’ and not go with a 1995 plan,” Keating said.

Encroachment is “a huge issue around airports all over the country,” he said. “There’s a lot of airports that are just in the middle of a city,” as communities grew up nearby.

Unlike municipally owned airports, Laughlin/Bullhead is a county-owned facility.

“We don’t have any control over the city; the city doesn’t have any control over us, so it’s kind of an interesting dynamic where we really need that cooperation from the city and they have been very cooperative, which has been excellent,” Keating said. “But there are a lot of communities where the airport is a different entity than the city and the city doesn’t want to cooperate and the FAA is mandating you to make this happen and it’s out of your hands a lot of times, so the cooperation of surrounding agencies is crucial.”