

Do landing fees reduce flight operations at an airport?

CONCLUSION: Landing fees do not reduce airport traffic

There is no noticeable effect on the SMO traffic after 2000 attributable to the institution of landing fees for transient aircraft in 2005 nor when landing fees were applied to all aircraft in 2013. In fact, there was a slight increase in traffic following each of these changes.

ANALYSIS: In order to answer the question about the effects of landing fees on airport traffic, we need to look at the operations history of SMO in context of the histories of other similar public airports in the area.

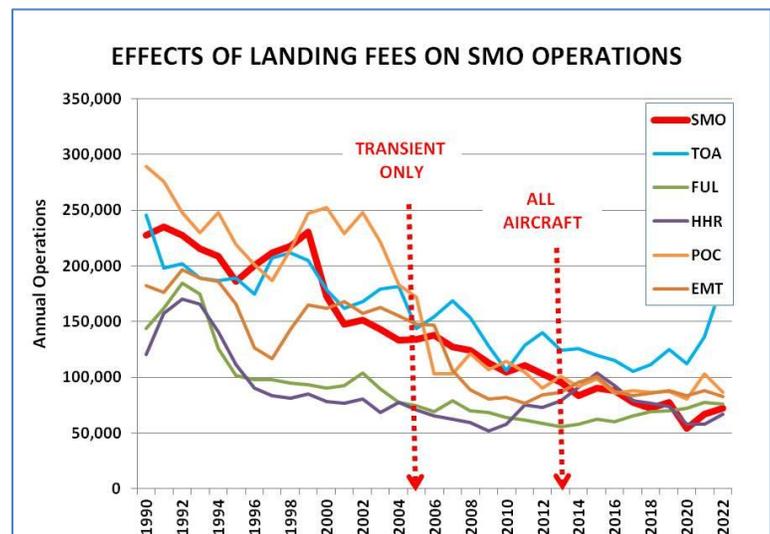
Airport	Number of Runways	Max Runway Length
SMO	1	3,500
TOA	2	5,001
FUL	1	3,121
HHR	1	4,884
POC	2	3,661
EMT	1	3,995

Landing fees for aircraft less than 12,500 pounds maximum landing weight are very rare. They are charged at only two airports in Southern California: Santa Monica Airport (SMO) and Catalina Airport (AVX). Catalina is a private airport and the landing fee is the only source of income for it.

Real estate interests in Santa Monica are driving the closure of its airport. The Santa Monica government has for years starved the airport and instituted policies aimed at driving out the once-thriving airport businesses. In January of 2008, the Santa Monica City Council voted to close the airport.

Catalina Airport, being a private airport with no FAA control tower, does not report annual operations to the FAA. The others, however, do make those reports and the data is available back to 1989.

This graph shows data from the FAA's database on airport operations. It shows Santa Monica (SMO) operations compared to other similar public airports in the Southern California urban area: Torrance Municipal Airport (TOA), Fullerton (FUL), Hawthorne (HHR), Bracket Airport (POC) and El Monte (EMT). These are all similar to SMO in terms of runway length, but they have no landing fees.



Landing fees at Santa Monica Airport began in 2005 for transient aircraft only. In 2013, the City Council set the landing fee at \$5.48 per thousand pounds of certificated maximum landing weight and applied this fee to both transient and based aircraft at the Santa Monica Airport. These changes became effective on August 1, 2013.

Airport traffic for Santa Monica Airport (SMO) has declined almost continuously since 1989, except for an uptick in 1996-1998. From 1998-2000, the rate plunged to meet the decline rate experienced before and after.

This same general decline is also noted for similar airports until about 2010, when traffic at the other airports began to level off or, in some cases, increase. The SMO decline continued unabated, however, due to the Santa Monica policies to drive out business and close the airport.

These landing fees had no noticeable effect on aircraft traffic at Santa Monica..

More information is at:

<http://www.TorranceAirport.org>

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