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**Gonzales Proposes Airport, Security and  
Traffic Improvements in San Jose**  
*Mayor recommends March election for voters to authorize  
plan for faster and better-coordinated construction*

*San Jose* ---- San José Mayor Ron Gonzales today proposed bringing a comprehensive plan to the voters in March in order to better coordinate the construction of significant improvements needed for security, traffic relief and passenger convenience at Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport.

Gonzales proposed a March election to pass the Airport Security and Traffic Relief Act. It would allow the airport to comply with all federally mandated security measures, while keeping the city's commitment to neighborhoods and traffic relief solutions and keeping costs as low as possible without raising taxes.

The measure would amend the city's Airport Traffic Relief Act adopted by the San José City Council in December 1999. The ATRA ordinance was approved to ensure that certain traffic relief projects at and near the airport were completed.

“We will make sure that our airport is both safe and convenient for the people and businesses in our city who depend on it,” said the mayor. “We must start to make improvements to our airport as soon as we can so we can comply with federal security requirements and start seeing the benefits of a better airport for San José and Silicon Valley in the most cost-effective way possible.”

*[more]*

Funding for future airport improvements would come from airlines, passenger fees, and other sources. No general city taxes or funds would be used.

The ATRA ordinance was the result of an agreement reached in 1999 between the city and the Airport Traffic Relief Alliance, a local community organization, to ensure responsible traffic and airport improvements. Amendments to the ordinance require voter approval by a simple majority.

Gonzales expressed his serious concerns about building new airport facilities that would provide only the minimum space needed to comply with federal security requirements, or that would have to be replaced when major renovations in the airport's master plan are built in the near future.

"Unfortunately since September 11, the constraints of the current ATRA ordinance mean that we cannot achieve our community's objectives for security, passenger convenience, and cost savings at this time," he said.

"Building only what is needed for security would result in the wasteful spending of tens of millions of dollars for just short-term solutions and make passenger comfort and convenience worse. Today's proposal provides a better path for our airport."

Under the terms of the current ordinance, the city cannot begin construction on airport terminal improvements or expansion until several specific traffic construction projects are within two years of completion. These include improvements to Route 87 and airport entrances, expansion of Coleman Avenue at Interstate 880, and an "automated people mover" to connect the airport with the VTA light rail system.

Although three of the highway and road improvement projects are moving forward, San José has not yet been able to secure complete funding for the APM connection to North First Street. Measure A, approved by voters in 2000, does include \$200 million to connect the airport to BART and light rail, but this funding will not be available until late in the decade.

Under the current ordinance, this means that airport improvements and expansion cannot proceed until funding and the construction schedule for an APM are resolved, which could be many years away. Construction on airport security improvements, however, must be ready much sooner to meet federal requirements.

*[more]*

The effect of the proposed amendments to the ordinance would allow airport terminal renovation and expansion to begin sooner, perhaps as early as next year, and be coordinated with federally mandated airport security improvements to save more than \$100 million compared to separate solutions. The traffic congestion relief projects would continue as outlined in the original ordinance.

Mineta San Jose Airport faces very difficult physical issues to accommodate new federal security measures. Neither Terminal A nor Terminal C has sufficient existing space to add the number and type of machines needed to screen baggage for explosives.

The terminals also do not have the space to accommodate the several hundred new federal screening personnel now responsible for airport security. Permanent accommodation of federal security measures and personnel will require major reconfiguration of existing space as well as the addition of significant additional space that does not now exist at either terminal.

Gonzales noted that he has worked over the past year in an effort to build a community consensus among key stakeholders for an airport solution that all could support and would enable the city to move forward.

“The best solution to allow us to incorporate federal security measures in a way that meets our commitments to traffic relief and prevents wasteful spending is to amend the ordinance,” he said.

“We must ensure that our airport remains a strong and positive economic factor for the benefit of the residents and businesses of San Jose. At the same time, we must make certain that the airport is a good neighbor to the adjacent community with our continuing strong commitment to traffic relief.”

The events of September 11 brought drastic changes since the adoption of the ATRA ordinance as the federal government mandated substantial additional security requirements at the nation’s airports. In November 2001, Congress passed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which established the Transportation Security Administration, federalized all passenger baggage screening at the nation’s airports, and mandated explosives screening of all baggage.

The Mayor’s proposal for a special election to amend the ATRA ordinance will be considered by the City Council at its meeting on November 26. The proposed election would be held on March 4, 2003.

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