



ONTARIO AIRPORT UPDATE

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Steve Lambert, Ontario Airport Alliance

Air traffic and passenger numbers at Ontario International Airport continue to decline sharply – down another 8 percent in 2013 – further threatening the airport’s ability to remain viable and serve as the economic engine it once was for the Inland Empire, the San Gabriel Valley and the region as a whole.

“Once” is the key word. ONT’s passenger volume has dropped from more than 7 million a year to 3.97 million in 2013 – below what it was when title was transferred from the city of Ontario to Los Angeles in 1985.

LA and the airport’s current operator, Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), claim the losses are a result of the recession. And yet, in 2013, LAWA’s flagship – Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) – saw a 3 million increase in passenger volume. As Riverside Press-Enterprise columnist Cassie MacDuff wrote, “The passenger figures underscore the LAWA is focused on boosting air traffic at the coastal airport while it lets Ontario drift into obscurity.”

All of which has prompted the City of Ontario to launch an aggressive campaign to win back control of ONT – a move supported far and wide.

- Cities throughout the region, the Southern California Association of Governments, the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp. and dozens of other regional bodies have formally endorsed local control of ONT.
- The Ontario International Airport Authority was formed as the governing body for a locally owned ONT, with representation from San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange and Los Angeles counties.
- Concerned business leaders have formed the Ontario Airport Alliance, and are teaming with the Inland Empire Economic Partnership, the Riverside Chamber of Commerce, the Industry Manufacturers Council and the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership to support Ontario’s efforts.
- According to recent polling, most LA city voters support Ontario and local control.

In 2013, Ontario sued LA and LAWA, and court-ordered negotiations have failed to produce a settlement. Without the settlement, Ontario is fully prepared to proceed with the lawsuit and demonstrate LA’s deliberate efforts to divert traffic from ONT by making it unaffordable for airlines and travelers. The suit will also show “criminal negligence” on the part of LA by setting an unreasonable price (\$474 million – nearly twice what Ontario has offered to dissolve the JPA between it and LA) for a dying facility.

The impact regionally is staggering. A report presented in late 2013 by the aviation consulting firm Oliver Wyman projected a further loss of 8,000 jobs and \$430 million in regional economic impact if current trend lines are allowed to continue, on top of previous losses of 10,100 jobs and \$540 million in economic impact.

The Ontario Airport Alliance and other stakeholders in the battle to save ONT respectfully seek your support in this critical endeavor.