

Media Release

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Final SMART Approaches report available

Three satellite-guided flight approaches to Auckland Airport have been modified as a result of trialling and community feedback, and will start being used in mid-2015.

The SMART Approaches use satellite-based navigation and enable aircraft to burn less fuel, emit less carbon dioxide and fly more quietly. Two of the flight paths approach Auckland from the north and the third approaches from the south. A fourth approach, also from the north is being developed for trial and public consultation in 2015.

The new approaches were trialled and then modified following public consultation on a draft report of the trial in May this year. They are a joint project between Auckland Airport, Airways New Zealand and the Board of Airline Representatives New Zealand (BARNZ).

SMART Approaches contribute to international aviation carbon dioxide-emission reduction proposals and are aligned with the Government's National Airspace and Air Navigation Plan. Calculations show that during the trial, fuel savings equivalent to approximately 600 flights between Auckland and Wellington were made along with carbon dioxide-emission savings of three million kilogrammes.

BARNZ' Executive Director, John Beckett, says satellite guidance enables aircraft to fly a gentler, steadier curved flight path.

"This method of flying approaches requires modern procedures and technology on the flight deck. It allows the aircraft engines to run at close to idle, reducing fuel burn, cutting carbon emissions and allowing aircraft to land more efficiently. It's good news for passengers and airlines," says Mr Beckett.

Airways' General Manager Systems Operator, Pauline Lamb, says the flight paths were adjusted after feedback from the trial.

"Airways' priority is safety, but we are also listening to the community and meeting the needs of our airline customers. We have been able to make the flight paths higher in places and widen the curves of the approaches, so that aircraft can reduce the use of thrust and speed brakes. That reduces the noise, uses even less fuel and delivers benefits for the environment," says Ms Lamb.

Auckland Airport's General Manager of Airport Operations, Judy Nicholl, says the three trialled flight paths were subjected to rigorous analysis and noise measurement.

"We also received valuable public feedback on them during a community consultation process. The flight paths help Auckland to be better connected to the rest of New Zealand and the world. The approaches are in line with global developments and safely enable the growth of Auckland Airport, which is vital to New Zealand's economy," says Ms Nicholl.

More than 420 flights land and take off at Auckland Airport every day. However, each of the new flight paths that approach the airport from the north will be used no more than ten times per day.

The final SMART Approaches report also confirms that from September next year all jets flying conventional flight paths from the north will no longer be able to make visual approaches to Auckland Airport. Visual approaches are considered to create more noise than instrument-based approaches. Visual approaches to the airport from the north by wide-body jets, such as the B777, were stopped earlier this year.

A copy of the final report on the SMART Approaches flight path trial is available online at www.aucklandflightpathtrial.co.nz.

Ends

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