

DATE: September 29, 2025
TO: Members, San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force
FROM: Malcolm Yeung, President, Airport Commission
Jose F. Almanza, Mark Buell and Susan Leal, Commissioners

SUBJECT: September 19, 2025 Memorandum: Criteria-Based Outcomes and Associated Analysis for Housing and Economic Development Bodies: AIRPORT COMMISSION

As members of the Airport Commission, we sincerely appreciate your thoughtful attention to the roles and responsibilities of the Airport Commission (the Commission). After reviewing the Streamlining Task Force recommendations related to the Commission, we feel compelled to provide comments specifically regarding the Commission to ensure continued best practices for Airport operations.

Given the global nature of SFO's operations and its role as one of the region's largest economic engines, it is critical that the Commission maintain independence in decision-making. Many of the decisions the Commission makes carry long-term implications that affect not just San Franciscans, but travelers, businesses, and workers from across the Bay Area and beyond. These decisions require leadership with a high degree of technical understanding and institutional knowledge and must be protected from short-term political shifts.

Maintain Removal for Cause

Reviewing the recommendations in the Memorandum on Housing and Economic Development Bodies, we strongly believe that protecting the Commission from political influence by maintaining member removal for cause is, and must continue to be, a core priority. This principle reflects the original intent behind the Commission's governance structure, which was specifically designed to ensure long-term, strategic oversight of the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) in service of the public interest.

Director Appointment

Aligning the Commission's governance structure with the proposed Governance Commission Template concentrates too much influence in the appointing authority, in this case, the Mayor. Such a shift would risk diminishing the Commission's independence and effectiveness. The complexity of SFO requires time and continuity to fully understand and manage. If the Airport Director were to serve at the will of an appointing authority, it could discourage long-term service and lead to increased turnover and loss of expertise to the detriment of the traveling public and the broader San Francisco community. SFO recently went through the process of appointing a new Airport Director, and the process ensured that the best candidate was selected without undue political influence.

Commissioner Terms


Airports operate on long-term master plans, supported by 30-year bonds. SFO's master plan is over 30 years old. Long tenured Commissioners provide stability and a deep understanding of Airport operations, regulatory framework and community priorities as most projects are multi-year. Tenured Commissioners safeguard these long-range visions providing continuity, accountability, and leadership.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. We hope you will take our comments into account as the Task Force continues its important work.

Sincerely,

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Malcolm Yeung

Airport Commission President