

New Software Snares Aircrafts' Assessments; Adding Millions to Public Funds

County Assessors are constitutionally responsible for valuing all taxable property, both real and personal, for property tax purposes. That responsibility includes commercial aircraft, such as those operating at LAX, as well as privately owned aircraft used for general aviation that are based or regularly operated in Los Angeles County.

In recent years, accurately identifying taxable aircraft has become increasingly challenging. Some aircraft owners have exploited complex registration practices and data gaps to avoid detection, even though California law is clear, aircraft are taxable based on where they are primarily located and operated, not where they are registered. Further complicating this work, changes in how aircraft ownership information is maintained by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have made it more difficult for local government agencies to identify aircraft activity and ownership.

As aviation activity has grown more sophisticated, the tools used by government to enforce the law fairly and consistently must evolve as well.

To meet this challenge, the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office has invested in advanced aircraft discovery software that analyzes multiple data sources to identify aircraft activity at local airports. This technology enables the County to locate and assess aircraft that previously escaped taxation, ensuring that all property owners are treated equitably and that the tax burden is fairly shared.

"My responsibility is to make sure every piece of taxable property is assessed accurately, so no one pays more than their fair share, and so our communities receive the revenue they are entitled to," said Los Angeles County Assessor Jeffrey Prang. "This is a clear example of how smart technology investments can improve fairness, strengthen compliance, and generate resources for the public good."

Since the program was initiated in January 2026, the new system has identified nearly 1,000 previously unassessed aircraft. These discoveries are projected to generate nearly \$2.5 billion in assessed value from prior year escaped assessments and more than \$1 billion in new assessments for the 2026 tax year. Together, these assessments are expected to produce roughly \$38 million in additional property tax revenue, funding that supports schools, cities, public safety, and other vital local services. That figure is expected to grow as investigations and further analysis continue.

By modernizing how complex and highly mobile property is identified and assessed, the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office is demonstrating that targeted technology investments can both improve efficiency and protect the tax base, ensuring fairness for taxpayers and long-term stability for the public services Los Angeles County residents rely on every day.

