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Boro lawmakers concerned about potential LaGuardia changes

By Tom Momberg

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Several state legislators from Queens signed and sent letters to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Aug. 12, expressing opposition to the possible elimination of the perimeter rule at LaGuardia Airport in the belief it may lead to increased aircraft noise in the borough.

The perimeter rule, which forbids any flights longer than 1,500 miles from departing from LaGuardia, has been in effect for over 30 years, but several lawmakers became concerned changes to the rule might be coming after Gov. Andrew Cuomo unveiled his plan to overhaul and renovate the airport at the end of July.

A spokesman for the Port Authority confirmed that while changes to the rule were being considered, no formal proposals have been made.

"The Port Authority is studying the potential impacts of changing the longstanding perimeter rule at LaGuardia Airport," the spokesman said.

Concerned for their constituents in Queens, who have been negatively affected by airplane noise from LaGuardia flights, state lawmakers led by Assemblyman Ed Braunstein (D-Bayside) wrote letters to the governor's office and the Port Authority, saying transcontinental flights might bring larger planes, greater air traffic and increased ground noise if the rule were to be altered.

"We know these conversations are taking place. We are just trying to raise the public's awareness," Braunstein said. "What I am concerned about is that we are all going to wake up one day, and larger, louder airplanes will be flying over our homes and nobody will know why."

Assemblymen Ron Kim (D-Flushing), Michael DenDekker (D-East Elmhurst), Michael Simanowitz (D-Flushing), David Weprin (D-Fresh Meadows) as well as Assemblywomen Aravella Simotas (D-Astoria) and Nily Rozic (D-Flushing) along with Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside) and Toby Stavisky (D-Flushing) signed on to the letters as did a few other downstate lawmakers.

The governor's redevelopment plan for LaGuardia calls for a new Terminal B and a new Central Hall at the airport, about 600 feet closer to the Grand Central Parkway. Cuomo and the Port Authority said between that redesign and the adoption of an "island gate system," taxiway circulation could be more than doubled, increasing the airport's efficiency while getting planes in and out without a substantial change to the way surrounding communities are affected.

A noise analysis conducted for the new Terminal B before the governor's proposal anticipated increased use of larger aircrafts and found that any noise increase would be too minor to merit consideration.

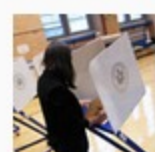
Delta Airlines has a major hub at LaGuardia and is investing largely in the airport's rebuilding. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

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Lifting the perimeter rule at LaGuardia Airport may result in the departures of larger, heavier aircrafts.

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