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United States Senate

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Michael P. Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

I write to provide an update on congressional action related to the flight-path changes implemented at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport in September of last year. Despite requests by the community, the airport, and Members of Congress to have the FAA consider meaningful ways to mitigate the impacts of these flight path changes, the issue remains unresolved. As a result of this inaction, Congress recently passed legislation providing that “the Administrator [of the FAA] shall complete and implement a plan which enhances community involvement techniques and proactively addresses concerns associated with performance based navigation projects.”

The Senate record provides further detail explaining the purpose of that provision. The record provides that the intent of this language “is to improve outreach to the community and airport, providing an opportunity for notification and consultation with the operator of an affected airport and the community before making future flight path decisions.” Continuing, the record provides that:

For changes that have already been implemented, as is the case in Phoenix, the Administrator shall review those decisions to grant a categorical exclusion under Section 213(c) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 to implement procedures in which the changed procedure has had a significant effect on the human environment in the community in which the airport is located, if the airport can demonstrate that the implementation has had such an effect. If this review indicates that the flight path changes have had such an impact, the FAA shall consult with the operator of the airport to identify measures to mitigate the effect of the procedure on the human environment; including considering the use of alternative flight paths.

I expect the FAA to promptly meet the requirements of this law, proactively working to address concerns and providing a long-awaited, much-needed opportunity for residents around Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport negatively impacted by flight noise to have their voices heard.

Sincerely,



John McCain
U.S. Senator

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