

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2016

Administrator Michael Huerta  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

We write to express our continued frustration with the lack of serious progress addressing community aviation noise concerns throughout the New York metro area. Each day thousands of New Yorkers are adversely impacted by airplane noise, and in recent years their concerns and the noise they are experiencing has, in many cases, gotten worse. This is an issue which the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) must give serious attention to and to the communities affected by it. Further inaction and delays are simply unacceptable. Therefore, we urge the FAA to take a number of immediate actions to address these concerns. The following actions are not an exhaustive list of measures that should be taken, but they are important steps the FAA can take quickly to begin making progress on this important issue.

Specifically, in an effort to improve community engagement, we request that you:

- Hold public meetings and other engagement sessions in advance of changing flight procedures or implementing new flight procedures. Profound changes to airport traffic patterns should include a community consultation prior to implementation.
- Hire a full-time professional ombudsman for the FAA Eastern Regional Office. The New York Metro area has the largest and most complicated airspace in the world; having a professional staffer at the regional level dedicated to work on behalf of the many impacted communities who can help avoid and resolve disputes and answer questions is both appropriate and necessary.
- Appoint additional community advocacy organization representatives – including representatives of community groups in the New York area – to the RTCA's NextGen Advisory Committee. As you know, NextGen implementation is having significant impacts on aviation operations, and ensuring community groups are well-represented in those discussions is critical.

Additionally, in an effort to use more scientifically-based noise modeling for determining community impacts and making flight path decisions, we ask that you provide our offices and the community stakeholders in the region with a full update on FAA's efforts to update its noise modeling metrics.

We are aware that in May 2015 the FAA embarked on an effort to conduct surveys, and analyze data to update the scientific evidence on the relationship between aircraft noise exposure and its effect on communities around airports. This is an important and valuable endeavor and we applaud you for taking this step. However, this process must move swiftly, and be conducted through an open, honest, and collaborative dialogue with noise-impacted communities around the country – including those in New York.

Issues have been repeatedly raised about the current noise modeling process, including significant issues with the outdated DNL threshold, failure for the current model to properly reflect human experience of episodic aviation noise, and the inability of the current model to account for variables including concentration of extended noise, the frequency of flights, air traffic at nights, and other similar issues. In light of these concerns, we urge you to ensure the new modeling effort you are working on addresses these concerns in a satisfactory way for impacted communities. We suggest that the agency develop a variety of methods for measuring the concentration of noise and particulate emissions as they are actually experienced, and on a cumulative rather than “per flight” basis. The goal should be to reduce noise and pollution, not simply shift them from one area to another.

By improving community engagement and dialogue the FAA can help play a valuable role in improving the quality of life for many thousands of New Yorkers living near airports. Furthermore, by using community input and engagement to inform decisions relative to updating noise modeling and mitigation efforts, the FAA can ensure that impacted communities begin to receive the relief they deserve. We know this is an effort you are committed to and our hope is that the actions outlined above can serve as a guide for further engagement by the FAA on the issue of noise pollution and its impact on quality of life in the New York area.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator