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Airport Noise Report



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NextGen Advisory Committee

FAA REJECTS QUIET SKIES CAUCUS REQUEST TO ADD FIVE COMMUNITY SEATS TO NAC

FAA has rejected a request by the Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus to add five community members to FAA's 30-member NextGen Advisory Committee as part of the NAC charter renewal.

At the request of a coalition of 62 community organizations, the House Quiet Skies Caucus urged Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg in an April 20 letter to expand the NAC membership to include more community representation.

The NAC currently has 30 members, including one seat reserved for community representation which is filled by the National Organization to Insure a Sound-Controlled Environment (NOISE).

The Caucus argued that there is precedent for the FAA to expand membership on its advisory committees, noting that the Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee, which provides independent advice and recommendations to the FAA on key unmanned aircraft system (UAS) and advanced air mobility (AAM) integration issues, had recently expanded its membership from 35 to 41 member and added one seat for a community representative. The community seat has not yet been filled.

"Hearing directly from affected communities is essential," the Caucus told Buttigieg but to no avail. Buttigieg did not reply to the Caucus letter but FAA did.

'NAC Expansion Not Warranted'

In a June 30 letter, FAA Acting Assistant Administrator for NextGen Paul Fontaine told members of the Quiet Skies Caucus:

"The NAC maintains a membership of no more than 30 members. For the FAA to comply with Federal Advisory Committee Act [FACA's] membership balance requirements and to align its investments, the NAC must maintain broad representation of the aviation community. NAC members are appointed to represent stakeholder domains. The FAA has carefully considered the number of representatives required from each stakeholder domain to provide input on the technical issues the NAC

considers. Of the 30 members, one is designated to represent the community and environment stakeholder group.

“In the coming months, a Federal Register Notice (FRN) will be published to solicit NAC membership applications for the next two-year term. While the FRN supports a transparent, diverse, and inclusive membership solicitation process, the membership will remain fixed at 30 members with the same domain representation. We invite qualified organizations to apply.

“We do not believe expansion of the NAC is warranted, however, we do believe in substantive communication and engagement with communities and we remain committed to that work.

“While the Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee (AAAC) recently expanded its membership from 35 to 41 members, at its expanded size of 41, there is one seat designated to represent the community stakeholder group. This expansion brings the community representation for the AAAC in line with the long-established representation on the NAC.

“A community concern raised in your letter focuses on the metric used to evaluate noise impacts. We understand that some members of the public have expressed views that the standard metric used by the FAA, the day-night average sound level (DNL), is insufficient for assessing community noise impacts. The FAA is currently undertaking a review of the FAA noise policy, including the noise metric and thresholds.

“However, the noise policy topic, including defining, updating, or evaluating noise metrics, is not within the scope of the NAC. The FAA will proactively engage stakeholders and the public in the review of the current noise policy through a robust, thorough, evidence-based, and inclusive process. This will include participation opportunities for all stakeholders, including those that represent local communities.

“Fundamentally, the agency agrees community input is important. The FAA has taken a number of concrete actions recently that demonstrate our commitment to this concept. The agency deployed the noise complaint initiative nationwide, published the neighborhood environmental survey, and initiated a full review of our noise policy.

“The FAA has completed nearly every noise related directives in the 2018 FAA Reauthorization Act. Additionally, the FAA developed and implemented “enhanced community engagement” initiatives to include routine participation at multiple airport-sponsored noise roundtables focused on building consensus recommendations and engaging airport noise officers.”

Community Leader Sees Positive Outcomes

Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA) Co-Founder Darlene Yaplee told ANR:

“Although the DOT response was disappointing there are some positive outcomes for aviation-impacted communities:

- The Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus recognized the Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance's (AICA) credibility, provided positive feedback, and supported the AICA request to send a letter to the Department of Transportation

(DOT). This action shows that the collaboration between the QSC and AICA continues to advance.

- The efforts of AICA and the QSC increased awareness on the fact that better community representation is needed on the NextGen Advisory Committee (NAC).”

NAC Charter Renewed

FAA announced in an Aug. 10 *Federal Register* notice that the NAC Charter was renewed for two years in June.

In an Aug. 11 *Federal Register* notice, FAA announced that the next NAC meeting will be held on Aug. 30 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at The MITRE Corporation building in McLean, VA, with an option to attend virtually. See *Federal Register* notice for information on how to attend. A detailed meeting agenda will be posted a week before the meeting.