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# ***Airport Noise Report***



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## ***Noise Policy Review***

### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS GIVE MIXED REVIEW OF JULY PANEL DISCUSSION WITH FAA**

The Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA), a coalition of over 70 grassroots community groups around the county, has published their 17 pages of notes on the panel discussion FAA held with them in July to enable the community groups to better respond to FAA's request for comments on its noise policy review.

The notes are attached to the email that brought you this issue of ANR.

They show that the panel discussion focused mainly on noise metrics and thresholds and on health effects. FAA was open to changing metrics and thresholds but said it was rare that health effects studies provide clear answers for policy changes. Also, FAA was adamant that any noise policy update would apply only to future agency actions and not to past flight path or operational changes.

ANR asked the three AICA members who led the community side of the panel discussion how effective they thought it was. Their answers, which express skepticism, hope, frustration, and disappointment, follow:

#### **Darlene Yaplee, AICA Co-founder, told ANR:**

There is no doubt that coalescing 70+ grassroots community groups around the country, speaking as a single voice versus acting individually, brought about the FAA and AICA webinar. The panel discussion was an unprecedented step in the right direction because the FAA recognized and engaged in dialogue with impacted grassroots groups as key stakeholders. Historically the FAA excludes directly impacted community groups and engages only with industry stakeholders, Roundtables, and elected officials or their representatives.

Unlike typical FAA meetings, the webinar allowed the community to select the questions without screening, ask follow up questions, provide explanations, and make comments. This is what communities expect as meaningful dialogue and discussion with FAA. The community panelists demonstrated the authenticity and importance of having community stakeholders who are knowledgeable and truly represent the issues, not token or inadequate community representation which continues to be a problem even today.

The Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS) were highly skilled and critical in bringing together two adversarial parties for the planning and execution of the webinar. The FMCS guided the discussion for the webinar goals, the preferred level of dialogue (i.e., Q&A, listening session, facilitated dialogue, and any combination), what differentiated roles or participants and attendees, and rules of engagement (e.g., no press or recordings).

For planning we had four meetings with the FAA, FMCS, and AICA and one meeting with the FMCS and AICA only. Although AICA had attended all four of the FAA Noise Policy Review Webinars held in October 2023, there was still a need for clarification and discussion on FAA's terminology, eleven noise policy review comment questions, and responses to participant questions. This is why interactive dialogue with follow up questions is crucial for community engagement.

The webinar was an example of why we urgently need an Impacted Communities National Advisory Committee as requested in AICA's Noise Policy Review Comment ID No. FAA-2023-0855-2206, for grassroot group representatives to provide input to FAA on current and future noise and pollution issues. Regionally, communities have little influence or voice on FAA decisions; nationally, we have virtually none.

The FAA has asserted that it has improved its community engagement efforts over the past few years by implementing tools and programs to address community engagement concerns. But the AICA's 2023 survey of 47 community groups on their experience with FAA community engagement for local and national topics in 2020, 2021, and 2022 compared to pre-2020, had responses of negative to limited improvement. This cannot continue moving forward.

We hope the FAA will use the best practices learned from the webinar regarding authentic and adequate community inclusion and engagement for FAA advisory committees, public workshops, and other pertinent forums and programs.

**Cindy L. Christiansen, PhD, AICA Co-founder, told ANR:**

I'm concerned that although our (AICA's) intentions were to help communities understand the Noise Policy Review (NPR) well enough to make informed comments on the FAA NPR, we have simply given the FAA their much-desired "engaged with community groups" check for their community engagement box to use for its (at-this-time) undisclosed NPR process. Affected communities received nothing in return. Sadly, while communities that live in FAA-created hell continue to suffer, the FAA has no plans to address the current noise problems it has caused.

If the FAA cared about communities, by now it would have contracted with the National Academies Division of Medicine for an independent consensus report on the public health effects of excessive aviation noise. I think the FAA is afraid of what the report would say. If it cared, the FAA would have formed a community advisory (FACA-based) committee to help it fix the NextGen, flight school, General Aviation noise problems and to minimize the upcoming advanced air mobility problems. And it would aim for justice, meaning it would create orders for flight management systems to handle multiple, dispersed, instrument procedures with flight paths that fairly share the burden of aviation noise. It has done none of these things. During the AICA/FAA

discussion, there was no indication that the FAA will do anything more than develop a noise policy that might help communities without current aviation noise problems.

After 10 years of working on this problem on behalf of sacrificial communities in the Boston area, I think I know the FAA's game plan and I won't be fooled by it again. I'm operating under the mantra "fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice shame on me" unless the FAA's actions change course.

### **GrotonAyer Buzz (Central Massachusetts) Founding Member Amy McCoy told ANR:**

AICA invited me to serve as the general aviation liaison for communities nationwide impacted by general aviation for the July webinar with FAA regarding the Noise Policy Review (NPR). The achievement of this meeting was a first time discussion of general aviation noise impacts (ex. concentrated flight training maneuvers, touch and go landings, hovering helicopters, aerobatics, and private jet paths) at a national level. At the same time, FAA's responses during the webinar highlighted that communities with general aviation noise concerns are not a FAA priority. The general aviation community is concerned that the new noise metrics will be one-size-fits-all and will not address residents' lived experience. The Noise Policy Review questions were difficult and not very accessible. My expectation is that the FAA will interpret the personal stories submitted to the NPR and turn them into meaningful input.

### **FAA Statement**

ANR asked the FAA to comment on the community representatives' assessments of the panel discussion. Following is FAA's reply:

The FAA was happy to participate in the Noise Policy Review panel discussion with Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA) on July 13, 2023. We believe our participation helped clarify the Noise Policy Review Federal Register Notice and provided an opportunity for AICA members to ask questions and hear directly from FAA.

Throughout engagements we have held with stakeholders on our Noise Policy Review, including our webinar series and the panel discussion with the AICA, we encouraged interested parties to provide feedback on our noise policy by submitting comments to the Docket for the Noise Policy Review Federal Register Notice (<https://www.regulations.gov/document/FAA-2023-0855-0001>). The Notice was published on May 1, 2023, with an initial 90-day comment period ending on July 31, 2023. In response to multiple requests to extend the comment period, the comment period was extended by an additional 60 days and closed on September 29, 2023.

We have received more than 4,850 comments on the notice, and we intend to review all comments received as we develop potential revisions to our noise policy. We have begun the process of reviewing comments, but do not have a timeline when the comment review will be completed at this time. As updates on timelines and next steps for the Noise Policy Review become available, they will be posted to the Noise Policy Review webpage which can be found at <https://www.faa.gov/noisepolicyreview>."