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FAA Reauthorization

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE IS DISAPPOINTED OVERALL WITH NEW FAA REAUTHORIZATION

The Aviation Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA), which represents over 70 grassroots community groups seeking to reduce the environmental impacts of aircraft noise and emissions, is dissatisfied “overall” with the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*.

The Act “vastly overweighs the interests of the aviation industry at the expense of communities harmfully impacted by aviation and lacks substantive actions to reduce impacts,” the Alliance said in comments attached to this week’s issue of ANR.

AICA categorized provisions in the new FAA Reauthorization Act that were of particular interest to communities as being either “promising,” “to be determined,” “not good,” or “missed opportunities.”

AICA found only one provision of the bill to be promising.

Section 793: Community Collaboration Program has promise, AICA said, because it requires FAA to update its internal guidance for community engagement “based on interviews with impacted residents” and “recommendations solicited from individuals and local government official in communities adversely impacted by aircraft noise.”

This provision, AICA said, “is an improvement over Sec.176. Community Outreach in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, which limited input [on how FAA conducts community outreach to] only an internal FAA ATC survey and is an example of not meeting the spirit of community inclusion to determine community engagement.”

“The litmus test for FAA’s collaboration with the community [under Sec. 793 of the new FAA reauthorization] will be whether the FAA adequately includes directly and substantially affected community representatives,” AICA stressed.

‘To Be Determined’ Provisions

AICA said it is withholding its assessment of six provisions of the new FAA Reauthorization Act because the details of the provisions “remain open for interpretation” by FAA. The community coalition called on the agency to use its interpretation of these provisions “to adequately address the concerns of and/or

include directly impacted communities given this will make the difference between being a positive or negative outcome for communities.”

Among these six ‘To Be Determined’ provisions are:

- **Sec. 603: NextGen Accountability Review**, which requires the FAA Administrator to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Public Administration for a NextGen review.

“We are pleased to see efforts towards accountability and transparency on quantifying the operational benefits of NextGen and encourage the reporting by single site airports and metroplex locations as well as an accurate, complete and transparent overall NextGen review given the negative noise and health impacts,” AICA wrote.

- **Sec. 786: Part 150 Noise Standards Update** – This provision requires FAA to clarify existing and future noise policies and standards including getting feedback “from individuals living in the vicinity of airports and in airport-adjacent communities.”

AICA said the FAA Administrator should not exclude “NextGen communities” – those that are not adjacent to airports but are farther out under new NextGen flight paths – in carrying out this provision.

- **Sec. 791: UFP Study** – AICA wrote, “Many advocacy groups including local Seattle groups worked with Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA) on H.R. 1049, introduced on Feb. 14, 2023, to conduct primary research on airborne ultrafine particles (UFPs) and their effect on human health. Rep. Smith’s bill specified an eligible institution of higher education to conduct the research.

“But what passed is Sec.791. UFP Study, a National Academies (NA) consensus report of existing research, not original research, and a modified version of HR.1049. In addition, the [FAA] Administrator has the discretion to and should specify the Medical Division of the NA to lead the consensus report as experts on health.

“A NA consensus report does not replace original research on UFP that is needed; a NA consensus report should come after the original research on UFP, and both should address existing disparities and negative health outcomes.”

So, the AICA asserted, “the good news is that the National Academies will review existing research on UFPs and make recommendations. The bad news is that [work will not begin on] the much-needed new research on UFPs by an institution of higher education and currently the consensus report is not being led by the Medical Division of NA.”

- **Sec. 792: Aviation Noise Advisory Committee** – “The membership is heavily weighted in favor of industry (5 of 8 members), researcher (1 member), and “airport-adjacent communities” (2 members). The Administrator has discretion on membership and should include directly and substantially affected community representatives, including those impacted by NextGen and General Aviation and having health expertise,” AICA wrote.

The community alliance said its outlook for the provision “varies depending on how well the Administrator selects true community representatives. The provision

modifies and reduces the intent of Rep. Lynch's (D-MA) H.R. 2565, which specified a majority representation from directly impacted communities."

NextGen, NES Must Be Addressed

In closing, the AICA wrote:

"As the FAA works to implement the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024* there are two major changes that occurred in the last 15 years that should be addressed: NextGen and the Neighborhood Environmental Survey (NES).

"We are at an inflection point for the national airspace system and its consequences. The FAA has not adequately included directly impacted communities as key stakeholders with the exception of the July 2023 on the Noise Policy Review.

"The AICA hopes and calls on the FAA to embrace new thinking in the 21st century and fulfill its assertions of "engaging in dialog and collaboration with communities affected by FAA actions" and "Communities concerns regarding noise have and continue to be a primary factor underlying the FAA's noise-related policies" through its interpretation and implementation of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*.

[\[The AICA's comments are attached to the email that sent you this week's issue of ANR.\]](#)