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Airport Noise Report



A weekly update on litigation, regulations, and technological developments

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Congress

REPS SUPPORT ROBUST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN NOISE PROVISIONS OF REAUTH.

On Sept. 16, Rep. Tom Suozzi (D -NY) announced that a bipartisan group of 40 members of the U.S. House of Representatives – almost all members of the Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus – sent a letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker urging the agencies to prioritize community engagement as they implement the airplane noise provisions in this year’s FAA Reauthorization Act.

Their action strongly supports the Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance’s July 18 letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg seeking sufficient community representation on FAA committees and community feedback provisions in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (36 ANR 87).

"Airplane noise is an issue today in part because the FAA has continually failed to consider community input over the years. On the heels of the bipartisan passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, we urge the FAA to ensure robust community participation throughout the implementation of the Reauthorization’s airplane noise provisions," Suozzi, who serves as Vice Chair of the Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus, said.

Noise Advisory Committee Should Be Priority

Congressman Suozzi encouraged the FAA to prioritize the formation of the Aircraft Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC), required under Section 792 of the new FAA Reauthorization Act, in order to meet the Nov.12 statutory deadline for its formation.

"The FAA and local airport authorities receive thousands of noise complaints every month, making it clear that the agency’s current noise policies are not working for airport-adjacent communities. It is essential that the FAA move quickly to establish the ANAC so that communities can experience relief sooner rather than later," Suozzi asserted.

In their letter to the DOT and FAA chiefs, the group of 40 congressional representatives wrote:

“Members of airport-adjacent communities as far as 20 miles away from a major airport have long known what the FAA has only recently acknowledged: that aviation noise poses a far greater daily nuisance and health risk than originally anticipated. Studies show that aviation noise disrupts sleep, causes chronic stress, and leads to higher risk of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and mental illness. These risks, combined with the FAA’s past failures to recognize the effects of its aviation noise policies, underscore the importance of incorporating community feedback into policy conversations.

“Section 792 of the Reauthorization forms an Aircraft Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC) to evaluate and offer changes to the FAA’s current aviation noise policies. Importantly, the Reauthorization mandates that the ANAC include multiple representatives of airport-adjacent communities, in addition to industry professionals. In their letter, the Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance (AICA) requests a minimum of four community representatives on the ANAC and proposes a handful of parameters for the FAA to consider during the selection process. We support these suggestions and urge the FAA to ensure a robust ratio of community representatives to industry professionals.

“In addition, we encourage the FAA to prioritize formation of the ANAC in order to meet the statutory deadline of November 12, 2024. The FAA and local airport authorities receive thousands of noise complaints every month, making it clear that the agency’s current noise policies are not working for airport-adjacent communities. It is essential that the FAA move quickly to establish the ANAC so that communities can experience relief sooner rather than later.

“The Reauthorization includes various other provisions that require the FAA to consult with communities, including Section 786 requiring the FAA to update Part 150, Section 793 regarding the coordination of FAA’s community engagement on noise issues, and Section 916 creating an unmanned and autonomous flight advisory committee. We echo AICA’s request that the FAA ensure vigorous community participation in its implementation of these statutes while considering factors such as the number of and accessibility of opportunities for community members to participate.

“Members of the affected communities are the most qualified to testify to the realities and effectiveness of the FAA’s aviation noise policies. Therefore, the FAA must do its part to solicit community feedback and ensure that it informs the agency’s decisions and strategy to reduce aviation noise impacts.”

Letter Defines ‘Airport-Adjacent Communities’

The congressional letter defines the term “airport-adjacent communities” included in Section 792 of the new FAA Reauthorization Act as those communities “as far as 20 miles away from a major airport.”

This definition by the 40 Quiet Skies Caucus members in their letter to DOT and FAA may be critical to getting communities located outside the immediate vicinity of

airports but impacted by NextGen flight path noise included on the Aviation Noise Advisory Committee that FAA is in the process of forming.

The term “airport-adjacent communities” was inserted late in the process of enacting the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The term is not defined in the legislation; who inserted it is not known; and community groups believe it is intended to keep communities outside the immediate vicinity of airports but impacted by NextGen flight path noise off of the new Aviation Noise Advisory Committee.

It remains to be seen if FAA will agree that communities as far out as 20 miles from a major airport should be included on the new noise advisory committee, which will do work crucial to defining any update of FAA’s aviation noise policy.

The AICA wants four members of noise-impacted communities and two health experts included on the new Aviation Noise Advisory Committee. AICA also asserts that an updated FAA aviation noise policy must reflect the “lived experience” of two separate noise exposure environments: communities near airports and communities farther away from airports under NextGen flight paths, general aviation flight training routes, or helicopter routes” (36 ANR 87).

Quiet Skies Caucus Leadership Comments

"I hear from D.C. residents almost daily about the negative impact of aircraft noise on their lives, despite the airspace restrictions related to being the nation’s capital," said Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Co-Chair of the Quiet Skies Caucus.

"The noise can be damaging to health and quality of life and can even harm the structural integrity of homes. As a co-chair of the Quiet Skies Caucus, I am pleased to join my colleagues to urge the FAA to consider feedback from representatives of airport-adjacent communities when making policy determinations."

"Greater Boston neighborhoods and surrounding towns have been continuously impacted by airplane noise that has disrupted their daily lives for years," said Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Stephen Lynch (D-MA). "It is very concerning that many areas, from South Boston to Dorchester to Milton and the South Shore, are disproportionately impacted by their exposure to airplane noise and poor air quality.

"We cannot allow our most burdened areas to continue to be subjected to the increased health risks that come with living in close proximity to the FAA’s designated flight paths. It is vital that the communities that suffer the most have the opportunity to provide input as the FAA begins to implement the airplane noise provisions included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024."

Added Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), "I’m proud to represent communities around Chicago’s O’Hare airport. With that comes the responsibility of listening to residents who are understandably frustrated about excessive airplane noise, which can impact both mental and physical health. In this Congress, I worked with my colleagues to include critical provisions in the bipartisan FAA Reauthorization bill to ensure communities impacted by airplane noise can provide feedback to the FAA. I urge the FAA to implement these provisions quickly so communities impacted by airplane noise can have a voice."

Suozzi Will Hold FAA Accountable

Rep. Suozzi served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2017-2022 but did not run for re-election last year. Instead, he made an unsuccessful run for governor of New York in a primary race against Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul. In February, Suozzi won a special election in New York's 3rd District to replace Republican Rep. George Santos, who was expelled from Congress.

"I am back ... and I am committed to holding the FAA accountable and ensuring they take meaningful action – not just offer lip service – to address this deafening issue that, in addition to impacting one's quality of life, can negatively affect one's health," he warned in his press release announcing his return to Congress.

Suozzi's return to Congress appears to have injected new life into the Quiet Skies Caucus, which over the past few years has seen some of its most active and influential members leave Congress.

The letter from the group of 40 House members to the DOT Secretary and FAA Administrator is attached to the email that brought you this issue of ANR. Four Republican House members signed the letter: Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY), Rep. Nick LaLota (R-NY), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Rep. Young Kim (D-CA). Reps. Kim and Fitzpatrick are members of the Quiet Skies Caucus; Reps. D'Esposito and LaLota are not.

More Info from FAA 'In Coming Weeks'

ANR asked FAA for a status report on the formation of the new Aviation Noise Advisory Committee, which Congress directed be up and running by Nov. 12 – just seven-and-a-half weeks from now.

ANR also asked FAA if it planned to respond to the letter sent by the groups of 40 House members.

Following is FAA's reply:

"The FAA is in the process of establishing the Aircraft Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC) as required under Section 792 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

"The ANAC will advise the FAA on issues facing the aviation community that are related to aircraft noise exposure and existing FAA noise policies and regulations and will be comprised of stakeholders from across the aviation industry, institutions of higher education, and community representatives. More details about the ANAC will be available in the coming weeks."

"In reference to the letter, we will respond directly to the members of Congress."