

United States Senate

November 26, 2019

The Honorable Stephen Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Dickson,

I write to report on the increasing number of serious concerns from my constituents throughout Southern California regarding new or increased airplane noise in their communities. Reports indicate that this noise increase is due to new flight patterns implemented by the FAA in conjunction with the NextGen air traffic control technology. I have received complaints from residents across Southern California, including from the communities of central Los Angeles, West Adams, Monterey Park, Montebello, Culver City, Malibu, Pacific Palisades, Lake Arrowhead, Sherman Oaks, North Hollywood, Topanga Canyon, Studio City, and Laguna Niguel. My congressional colleagues and I made initial inquiries to the FAA in 2017 regarding the Southern California Metroplex and problems that our constituents are facing on a daily basis from the implementation of this system.

NextGen implementation for the Southern California Metroplex was intended to increase efficiency, reduce travel times, and reduce carbon emissions. While the Environmental Assessment reported a Finding of No Significant Impact, these communities are experiencing considerable disruptions, which may not have been properly addressed during the Environmental Assessment. My office has also been informed that the FAA public engagement process for the Environmental Assessment was conducted in a passive manner, one that may not meet the full standards of responsibility to the public. The new flight paths are focused into highly concentrated routes, which greatly bombard some residents with near-constant airplane noise. In addition to the concentrated routes, constituents have reported low flying aircraft that are potentially out of compliance with established altitude levels.

I appreciate the responses that the FAA has provided regarding our inquiry into the Lake Arrowhead waypoint and the announcement that a new route is in development to alleviate the noise impacts that have occurred affecting that community. Additionally, I appreciate your Region 9 Administrator understanding the importance of a separate roundtable for the communities impacted by the Hollywood Burbank and Van Nuys airports. The upcoming public forum on December 4th is an important step toward transparency and community engagement. This continued type of engagement and facilitation with the public and my office is necessary as we work together to serve California and to ensure transparency and accountability.

While I appreciate the FAA's efforts to date, it is critical the FAA do more to rapidly implement the noise and community engagement provisions in the 2018 FAA Reauthorization and address the negative impacts NextGen implementation has had on communities. My colleagues and I fought for the inclusion of these amendments and many of them have statutory deadlines that to my knowledge have yet to be met. To that end, I request that you submit a detailed timeline regarding the implementation of all noise amendments that were passed in the FAA Reauthorization. Furthermore, since I have not received them, I write to again request copies of all Standard Operation Procedures, Letters of Agreement, Operational Orders, Notices, and Memorandums of Understanding issued for flight arrivals at Los Angeles International Airport from January 1, 2014 through June, 2019. Production of these documents for analysis by elected offices may lead to measures that reduce the noise burden faced by our constituents. My staff and I have been diligently working to find viable solutions for many communities that are being impacted by noise pollution and we want to ensure that our work is comprehensive.

Finally, as you engage in your role as Administrator, I request that you make it a priority to hold a face-to-face town hall with impacted constituents in Southern California. Your personally meeting with impacted constituents will further enable you to understand the gravity of the problem and in turn, facilitate a timely solution. My staff has visited impacted communities and can attest to the veracity of the complaints. As the top official at the FAA, it is essential that you have a real understanding of the impacts of NextGen implementation. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,



KAMALA D. HARRIS
United States Senator

CC: Raquel Girvin, Regional Administrator FAA – Western Pacific Region
Kim Stover, Director of Operations, Air Traffic Services Western Service Area