

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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TESTIMONY OF DENNIS MCGRANN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ORGANIZATION TO INSURE A

SOUND-CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT

NOISE

Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and Members of the Committee, my name is Dennis McGrann and I am the Executive Director of the National Organization To Insure A Sound-Controlled Environment (NOISE). NOISE is an affiliate of the National League of Cities, and for over thirty-seven years has served as America's preeminent community voice on aviation noise issues. We are comprised of locally elected officials, including city council members, mayors, county supervisors and commissioners from communities across the United States, adjacent to major commercial airports.

Our members regularly participate in cooperative communications with airports, and aviation industry stakeholders and we serve on a national level as Chair of the FAA's PARTNER advisory board, as well as a member of the FAA's Airport Compatibility Planning Committee (ACPC) and the Environmental Working Group (EWG).

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Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you today on behalf on thousands of Americans in communities across the United States who live under the flightways of our major commercial aviation corridors and who deal with the environmental, health and safety consequences associated with aviation noise issues for holding this hearing today and addressing these critical issues.

I would also be remiss if I did not take the time to thank full Committee Chairman Oberstar for his years of dedicated service and attention to the challenges faced by communities and airport neighbors across the country and for addressing the issues of aviation noise. In 2003 Chairman Oberstar was awarded the NOISE Lifetime Achievement and Environmental Champion Award for his outstanding efforts in engaging local communities in aviation noise and related airport issues.

Our members are communities that depend on our airport neighbors for jobs, commerce and our economic vitality. We recognize that the reality of aviation today requires the system to increase capacity and our airport neighbors will need to grow to accommodate this expansion. We are, however, dedicated to addressing the issues faced by communities who chronically deal with the adverse environmental and health impacts of excessive aviation noise and continuously seek to engage all community and aviation stakeholders in a constructive dialogue to address these issues.

I would like to call attention today to three key aspects that we believe are essential to pursuing a meaningful route to effective management of noise issues: communication; research and development; and ongoing noise mitigation.

First, the benefits of effective communication between communities and airports are clear. When airports and communities work together to meet the challenges of aviation noise, success follows. NOISE supports those efforts and advocates for communication and cooperation as opposed to litigation and confrontation. We work to foster this dialogue and strive to bring community leaders, airport operators and government officials together and to establish a framework for the empowerment of localities surrounding airports.

For over 25 years, The San Francisco International Airport/ Community Roundtable has fostered successful airport/community interaction and involvement. Eighteen cities, the operator of San Francisco international airport, the city and county of San Francisco and the county of San Mateo comprise the roundtable, a voluntary public forum established in 1981 for the discussion and implementation of noise mitigation strategies at San Francisco International Airport (SFO). The roundtable monitors a performance-based aircraft noise abatement program as implemented by airport staff, interprets community concerns and attempts to achieve additional noise mitigation through a cooperative sharing of authority brought forth by the aviation industry, the FAA, airport management and local elected officials.

Another development that will enhance communication is the PARTNER *Noisequest* website-- designed to educate communities and airports on effective strategies and available tools which help create a constructive dialogue when addressing noise issues and community concerns.

We also urge continuation of a Vision 100 initiative that enables community empowerment, that is the extension of the authorization of section 160 which authorizes the FAA fund grants to states and units of local government with a goal of reducing incompatible land use around large and medium-sized airports. This program is a key step towards avoiding litigation and a useful tool for communities to use independently of the airport.

The second important element to addressing these issues and a key to the future is full funding of research and development efforts. There are numerous programs and technologies being explored today that hold great potential for a future with quieter skies. One specific example is the PARTNER led research and testing in the development of the continuous descent approach, (CDA) which allows for quieter landing procedures. I can't stress enough the value of investment into CDA and other technologies, which many not only aid in reduction of noise pollution but also decrease the adverse environmental impacts of aviation on our land, air, and water.

It is essential that while working to achieve better technology and community involvement, we must not abandon effective community based noise mitigation efforts. While we work toward better communication and advanced technologies, we must still

be aware and concerned with the communities that have seen their neighborhood airports expand around them and who now deal daily with the resultant environmental consequences. Homes, schools, hospitals and churches in the communities adjacent to major airports are often subject to the effects of excessive aviation noise. We need to promote noise mitigation, compatible land use planning, insulation programs and other effective strategies in these communities to reduce noise and achieve the NextGen stated goal of a real reduction of the environmental impact of the national aviation system.

A prime example of the benefits of cooperative effort is the recently announced MSP agreement between the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) and signed by the City Councils of Minneapolis, Richfield and Eagan, which provides extensive noise mitigation for thousands of citizens in these communities that were affected as a result of the expansion of the airport. A recent editorial asserts that the community leaders, officials and members of the MAC deserve great credit for reaching this agreement which will result in quality of life enhancements.

Again, Mr. Chairman I commend you and your colleagues for holding this hearing today and pledge that NOISE will continue to work to provide a vehicle for interaction between communities, airports and national stakeholders and will actively support initiatives and programs which effectively address aviation noise abatement.