

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
AVIATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: NOISE
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- I want to thank Chairman Costello and Ranking Member Petri for calling today's hearing on *Aviation and the Environment: Noise*. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) forecasts that airlines are expected to carry more than 1 billion passengers by 2015, increasing from approximately 744 million in 2006. With an increase in passenger traffic, there has been an increase in delays. The first eight months of 2007 accounted for the worst delays on record with almost 28 percent – a total of 1.39 million flights – were delayed, cancelled or diverted.

- The FAA states that new runways and runway extensions provide the most significant capacity increases. There has been some development of airport capacity over the past few years: new runways have been opened at some of the nation's busiest airports, including runways in Detroit, Cleveland, Denver, Miami, Houston, Orlando, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Cincinnati. These efforts will continue. Between now and 2011, 6 airports plan to begin 8 airfield projects (5 new runways, 2 runway extensions, and 1 airfield reconfiguration). H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007, provides record funding levels for the FAA's airport programs: a total of \$15.8 billion for four years.

- However, I am mindful of the obstacles that the United States still faces in trying to expand our airport capacity through infrastructure improvements. Many of our airports back up to residential neighborhoods because local governments did not engage in any meaningful zoning or land-use planning. This serious lack of foresight has stifled the growth of many of our nation's busiest airports, thereby inhibiting growth for local industries. The local residents are unwilling, and rightfully so, to destroy their quality of life by agreeing to more operations at the airport.

- During hearings in 1990 on federal aviation noise policy, I observed that even if we succeed in “increasing air traffic control technology modernization and expanding the physical capacity of airports to accommodate more aircraft, if the public is not willing to accept the burden of noise generated by expanded air traffic, then the other two advances will be nullified.” Today, this statement is still true. Noise abatement, like runways, is a capacity issue.

- While advanced technology, new operational procedures, and land use measures have all contributed to noise reductions at airports, advanced technology has played the primary role. According to the FAA, jets today are seventy-five percent quieter (twenty decibels) than early jets. The transition to stage 3 aircraft has had the most impact in reducing aviation noise, and aircraft that meet stage 4

standards will cumulatively be ten decibels quieter than stage 3. The FAA states that there has been over a 90 percent reduction in the number of people affected by aircraft noise in the U.S. between 1975 and 2005.

- While we have made great strides in reducing environmental impacts on communities in the last few decades, the FAA predicts that “noise and emissions could increase between 140-200 percent over the next 20 years, becoming a significant constraint on planned capacity increases.”

- Accordingly, as the U.S. increases its infrastructure investment, it must balance airport capacity expansion with environmental protection. The FAA has several programs that aid airports and communities in dealing with noise issues. Since 1982, the U.S. has issued \$5 billion in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants and approved the imposition of \$2.8 billion in Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) revenue for noise mitigation measures, such as soundproofing schools, homes, and churches located near airport property, as well as on land purchases and relocation assistance.

- Under the FAA’s part 150 program, an airport operator may be eligible for money set aside under the AIP for noise projects (approximately \$300 million per year) if it submits a noise exposure map and a noise compatibility program (NCP) to the

FAA for review. An airport's development of a part 150 NCP details the measures that the operator has taken, or proposes to take, to reduce existing incompatible land uses and prevent the introduction of new incompatible land uses at the airport in areas covered by the noise exposure map.

- However, participation in the part 150 program is voluntary, and some airports have chosen not to participate. For example, some airports have chosen to take advantage of alternative funding methods for noise mitigation that do not require a part 150 NCP, such as the use of PFCs, as well as available AIP funding for schools and medical facilities and noise projects in conjunction with airport development projects. Other airports have chosen not to participate because they may have a long standing noise program similar to, but predates the part 150 program; are concerned about the cost of conducting the study itself (for a large airport, the costs can exceed \$1 million); or may have numerous incompatible land uses around the airport making mitigation cost prohibitive. According to the FAA, 17 of the top 50 busiest airports do not participate in the part 150 program, including New York's JFK and LaGuardia airports. I look forward to hearing the testimony of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey regarding why it has chosen not to avail itself of the part 150 program.

- Moreover, the importance of well-funded U.S. research to reduce aircraft noise and emissions cannot be overstated. Since 1990, the U.S. government has spent approximately \$600 million on research to reduce commercial aviation source noise, with approximately \$34 million of the \$600 million funded by the FAA, and the rest provided by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The FAA plans on pursuing significant research on environmental issues, including accelerating development of promising aircraft engine and technologies to reduce noise and emissions as it proceeds with the Next Generation Air Transportation System. We must act now to preserve vital research programs as we move forward towards new global aviation noise and emissions standards; H.R. 2881 includes approximately \$1.8 billion in research and development funds for the FAA.

- H.R. 2881 also includes several provisions related to noise mitigation and land use initiatives, such as the phasing out of stage 2 aircraft; research programs for the development, maturing and certification of continuous lower energy, emissions and noise engine and airframe technology; allowing airport operators to reinvest the proceeds from the sale of land that an airport acquired for a noise compatibility purpose into other noise/environmental projects; and providing new tools to encourage airport compatible redevelopment of noise impacted properties adjacent to airports to ensure joint comprehensive land use planning.

- We must continue to be aggressive in both research and development as well as to reduce incompatible land use around airports. Only in this way can we be sure that our commercial aviation industry continues to thrive, but not at the expense of surrounding communities.

- Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.