

THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

STATEMENT OF RALPH F. TRAGALE

MANAGER, GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING ON AVIATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: NOISE

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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Chairman Costello, Congressman Petri, Congressman LoBiondo, Congressman Hall and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, good afternoon. My name is Ralph Tragale and I am the Manager of Government & Community Relations for The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Aviation Department. On behalf of the Port Authority, I would like to thank you for organizing this hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify today and to share with you our thoughts regarding aviation and the environment. My comments, while brief, are intended to demonstrate the significant effort by the Port Authority to address the issue of aircraft noise and to share with you the results of that effort.

The Port Authority is a bistate public authority created in 1921 by the two States with the consent of Congress. Its mission on behalf of the States is to identify and meet critical transportation infrastructure needs of the bistate region and facilitate the movement of people and goods to and from the rest of the nation and the world. The Port Authority operates many of the busiest and most important transportation facilities in the region. In addition to the airports, these include the George Washington Bridge and Bus Station; the Lincoln and Holland tunnels; three bridges connecting Staten Island and New Jersey; the PATH rapid-transit system; the Downtown Manhattan Heliport; Port Newark; the Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal; the Howland Hook Marine Terminal on Staten Island; the Brooklyn Piers/Red Hook Container Terminal; and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan. The agency also owns the 16-acre World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan.

The agency also operates four airports that are critical to the nation's trade, travel, commerce and tourism – John F. Kennedy International (JFK); Newark Liberty International (EWR); LaGuardia (LGA); and Teterboro (TEB). In 2006 these airports accommodated 104 million passengers, with over 2.6 million tons of cargo on 1.2 million aircraft movements. This activity produces an astounding \$62 billion in annual economic activity and directly and indirectly supports more than 375,000 jobs in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region. In addition, on November 1st of this year, the Port Authority will take over operations at Stewart International Airport. On behalf of the Port Authority I would like to take this opportunity to thank Congressman John Hall and Maurice Hinchey for all their support in helping us acquire Stewart.

AVIATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: NOISE

Regarding the issue at hand, Aviation and the Environment, with a specific focus on noise. The Port Authority has a long history of actions taken to reduce the impact of aircraft noise on residential areas around each of our airports. The oldest one of these actions is our departure noise limits adopted in 1959, which required that aircraft be operated not to exceed 112PNdB in the nearest community under the flight path.

This restriction is part of the Port Authority's terms and conditions that every air carrier must adhere to if they wish to operate at our airports. It is the responsibility of each air carrier to determine methods of compliance, which could include thrust reduction, turning away from the community, limitations of gross weight, or utilizing aircraft with quieter engines. This was truly historic. It was the first noise rule established in the aviation industry, and we believe it was the catalyst that led to engine manufacturers efforts in research and development of quiet engine technology. This may be a bold statement, but at the time the New York/New Jersey market was undeniably the most important destination in the world for the aviation industry and because of that, virtually every aircraft built had to use one of the Port Authority's airports in the course of their business. This fact required that manufacturers in this country and abroad build the quietest engines possible.

Over the next almost 40 years, the Port Authority developed a series of programs that led the nation's noise mitigation strategies. Some of these initiatives included restrictions on run up of aircraft engines during maintenance, noise abatement flight procedures zoning guidance for local municipalities and voluntary curfews to name just a few. The Port Authority's programs were very successful and in the 1980s led to the FAA's development of the Part 150 Program. This voluntary federal program was developed using the Port Authority's existing noise abatement programs as a model and helped airports build strong relationships with their neighbors. Other than our school soundproofing program which to date includes 78 schools at an estimated cost in excess of \$400 million our focus and the programs we have developed have been directed on mitigating noise at the source – the aircraft engine.

Our analysis indicates that our approach has been very successful. In the 1980s the number of people then living in noise-impacted areas around the three major commercial airports was close to 2 million. Thanks to our noise programs, and the establishment of mandated Stage III noise limits on new aircraft engines, the number of people now living in federally defined noise-affected areas has dropped more than 95% to under 100,000 based on the most recent noise exposure maps.

However, the Port Authority will not be content until we achieve full noise compatibility between each airport and its residential neighbors while taking into account the requirements of the national aviation system, which is critical to this region's economic fabric. The FAA is in the midst of a multi-year airspace redesign effort to implement new flight procedures, new technologies, aircraft equipment and other infrastructure, in the NY/NJ region where the need is greatest. The FAA believes that new navigational technologies and new procedures will allow flights to be redirected over the least noise sensitive places such as highways and industrial areas.

CONCLUSION

Now the million-dollar question. Why has the Port Authority not conducted a Part 150 study? As I noted earlier, it's a voluntary program modeled after our existing noise abatement programs. Most importantly, we already employ all the elements of a Part 150, except of course for residential soundproofing. However, as I also said, we have a huge commitment to reducing the noise impact from aircraft, evidenced by our significant school soundproofing program. In addition, we stand ready to meet with airport neighbors to continue working together to ensure that the Port Authority and our airport partners remain good neighbors.

The Port Authority is deeply grateful to this committee and its staff for giving us this opportunity to discuss these important issues and is committed to our joint goal of protecting the air traveling public and the people who live, work and learn near our nation's airports. I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions the Committee might have. Thank you.

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