

Testimony of Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo
Member Day Hearing
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
April 18, 2023, 10 a.m.

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, thank you for the opportunity to testify at the Member Day hearing for the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. As you know, Congress must pass the next FAA reauthorization by September 30th to ensure that the FAA can continue its important work to maintain the safety of the U.S. civil airspace. As you begin drafting this legislation, I urge you to address the impact of aviation noise on communities near airports.

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) NextGen program includes the use of Performance Based Navigation which allows aircraft to fly along more precise routes. This technology also has the unfortunate side effect of concentrating jet noise over communities under these flight paths. Since 2015, noise complaints at San Francisco International Airport increased by over 1,000 percent, and I continue to hear from so many constituents who experience elevated levels of noise.

While the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 included modest provisions intended to address these concerns, the FAA has been slow to implement them, and the law has failed to provide any substantive relief to my constituents in the nearly five years since its passage. The next reauthorization must not repeat the failures of the 2018 law and should address its deficiencies by providing clear direction to the FAA to adopt policies that will actually reduce noise exposure. These changes should include reevaluating inadequate measures of noise to ensure that the FAA adopts more appropriate metrics that capture the true impacts of changes in flight paths to our constituents on the ground.

Noise Metrics

The FAA relies on the 65 decibel day-night average metric (DNL) to measure noise impacts, but community surveys have consistently demonstrated that this metric significantly underestimates the negative impacts of aviation noise. The FAA has failed to adequately consider alternative metrics such as the Cumulative Noise Equivalency Level, which is used by the State of California, and the day-evening-night level metric (DENL) used in Europe.

The next FAA reauthorization should direct the FAA to reanalyze the data collected in its Neighborhood Environmental Survey using alternative metrics such as N-Above (the number of flights exceeding a specified sound level) and T-Above (the amount of time a community is exposed to noise above a certain level). By comparing these metrics to the annoyance data collected in the Neighborhood Environmental Survey, the FAA can determine whether alternative metrics serve as better measures of annoyance reported by communities when compared to the existing DNL metric.

Consideration of Community Impact

The FAA has a statutory mandate to prioritize safety and efficiency when designing flight paths. While safety should always be the FAA's top priority, efficiency should be balanced against

other impacts of changes to flight paths, including noise. I've supported legislation to require the FAA to elevate the importance of noise when designing flight paths, including the *F-AIR Act* from the 117th Congress, and I encourage you to include this policy in the upcoming reauthorization.

Aviation noise is not merely a nuisance. It substantially diminishes the quality of life of so many of my constituents, including many who live dozens of miles from San Francisco International Airport. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing and for reviewing my testimony. I stand ready to work with you and your staff on the specific legislative language to implement these recommendations in the FAA reauthorization.