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Terry English
Federal Aviation Administration
11 Murphy Drive
Nashua, NH 03062
terry.english@faa.gov

VIA E-MAIL AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Dear Ms. English:

In my capacity as a representative to the Massachusetts legislature from Somerville, I write today to offer my comments on the recent recommendations from the Community Advisory Council (CAC) of the Boston Logan Airport Noise Study (BLANS). I sincerely appreciate the efforts CAC to address the problem of noise pollution in the communities surrounding Logan Airport, and thank you for your involvement in the Study. I am supportive of the CAC's recommendations, and respectfully request that the Federal Aviation Administration work to devise a more balanced approach to the use of Logan Airport's 33L runway.

The current use patterns for 33L impose a significant noise burden on Somerville. I have heard regularly from constituents over the last year that the problem is worsening, and has become a source of considerable distress. I can attest to the legitimacy of these complaints, as my own home is in the affected region. This increase in complaints correlates directly to an increase in the use of the 33L runway from 6% to 20% of west-bound flights, a pattern for which I have not yet heard an adequate justification. Massport and the FAA blame more frequent Northwest winds for this practice, which I think is a dubious explanation for such a dramatic increase in use of this runway.

Although I agree with the CAC's desire not to introduce a noise problem in currently unaffected communities, steps must be taken to ameliorate the noise pollution problem for Somerville. The CAC favors Flight Concept F - P, which would extend the turnaround point for west-bound flights out to Wellington instead of turning these planes around over Somerville. This would extend the distance measuring equipment (DME) from 3.5 miles to 5 or 6 miles, allowing planes to turn around at an altitude of approximately 5000 feet instead of 3500 feet. Though this expedient would not solve the noise pollution problem, and residents of Somerville's Winter Hill

neighborhood would still hear some airplane noise, the decibel (dB) impact for Wellington would be 3.5 dB lower than it is now for Somerville.

I understand that the FAA wants to explore the possibility of using a “fan-out” method for turning planes around. I am concerned that “fanning” departures out in this way will not bring real relief to the Somerville community since the fanning out will be within the existing turnaround routes. Additionally, this fanning could spread noise pollution throughout Boston-area communities, since it would apply to all runways, not just 33L. I don’t think that introducing “fan out” is a viable long-term solution, and would worsen the overall problem of airplane noise rather than alleviating it.

Flight Concept F – P represents progress in terms of noise pollution abatement, but is not the optimal long-term solution. I recommend extending the turnaround point out farther than Wellington to a full 7 miles, which would provide a 6 dB decrease from the current noise level in Somerville. Planes would be flying at an altitude of 7000 feet at this point, and the impact on the community below would be substantially lessened. Additionally, I would point out that the area 7 miles out from Logan Airport is more industrial in nature.

Finally, I would like to advocate for a reexamination of the FAA’s guidelines for which “close-in” communities are eligible to receive grants for soundproofing certain residences seriously affected by noise pollution from the airplanes. Residents experience real health and quality of life impacts at levels of noise below DNL 65. One phase of the Noise Study focused on the communities much further out for this reason—if noise above the DNL 65 threshold were the only thing that mattered, there would be no BLANS. According to current standards, Somerville does not qualify for such grants because it is not above the 65 dB Day Night Average Sound Level (DNL) required to be eligible for these funds. If the current practice of using runway 33L is to continue, Somerville residents deserve an opportunity to mitigate the noise effects, as the East Boston and Winthrop communities have had in the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can do or provide anything further that would be helpful to you as you work toward a solution to this problem of noise pollution for the Somerville community.

Very truly yours,



Denise Provost
State Representative, 27th Middlesex District