



Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: February 27, 2020

To: Office of Airports Regional Directors, AXX-600s;
Regional Airport Planning & Programming, AXX-610s;
Airports District Office Managers, XXX-ADOs.

From: Robert Craven, Director
Office of Airport Planning and Programming, APP-1 

Subject: Reauthorization Program Guidance Letter (R-PGL) 19-06: Environmental and Noise

This Reauthorization Program Guidance Letter (R-PGL) 19-06 explains and implements provisions in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (the 2018 Act) (P.L. 115-254) that impact environmental and noise programs under 49 U.S.C. chapters 471 (the primary statutory provision governing the Airport Improvement Program [AIP]) and 475. This R-PGL is directed to Office of Airports' staff for the purpose of helping them implement statutory changes. This R-PGL is not legally binding in its own right and will not be relied upon by the FAA as a separate basis for affirmative enforcement action or other administrative penalty.

This PGL includes analyses and implementation strategies for the following topics and bill sections:

Bill Section(s)	Topic	49 USC Section(s) impacted
174	Updating airport noise exposure maps	47503(b)
191	Extending aviation development streamlining	47171, 47175

Section 174, Updating airport noise exposure maps.

Section 49 U.S.C. 47503(b) requires airport operators with noise exposure maps to submit a revised map if a change, which is not reflected in either the existing conditions map or forecast map currently on file with the FAA, in the operation of the airport:

- (1) establishes a substantial new noncompatible use; or
- (2) would significantly reduce noise over existing noncompatible uses.

Section 174 amends 49 U.S.C. 47503(b) by requiring submission of an updated noise exposure map only if the relevant change occurs during:

- (1) the forecast period of the applicable noise exposure map; or
- (2) the implementation period of the airport operator's noise compatibility program.

This provision applies only to airport sponsors that have a noise exposure map on file with the FAA.

Moving forward:

Airport sponsors that currently have noise exposure maps, and are seeking AIP or PFC funding for a noise compatibility project, will be required to update and submit revised maps when it is necessary to reflect new conditions. This practice will not vary significantly from existing requirements that airport sponsors confirm in writing to the Airports District Office (ADOs) that noise exposure maps upon which noise compatibility projects are based continue to be a reasonable representation of the current and/or forecast conditions at the airport when those maps are more than five years old. ADOs will continue to verify whether the noise exposure map reflects the current or projected operational conditions at the airport and associated noncompatible land uses when maps are more than five years old.

Guidance and Tools:

The FAA will update the AIP Handbook (FAA Order 5100.38D, Change 1) and FAA Advisory Circular 150/5020-1, Noise Control and Compatibility Planning for Airports, to reflect this change. Future updates to 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 150 are subject to other changes in the statute in addition to Section 174. The statute always supersedes the regulation. Questions on noise exposure maps or noise compatibility programs may be directed to the Airport Planning and Environmental Division (APP-400).

Section 191, Extending aviation development streamlining.

Section 191 amends 49 U.S.C. 47171, *Expedited, coordinated environmental review process*, to include general aviation airport construction or improvement projects in the description of projects that are subject to an expedited environmental reviews. This section also amends 49 U.S.C. 47175, *Definitions*, by adding a definition for the term "general aviation airport construction or improvement project."

Moving forward:

This provision is consistent with FAA's current practices related to environmental streamlining.

Although general aviation airport construction or improvement projects were not specifically identified in the list of designated projects subject to environmental streamlining under P.L. 108-176, the FAA adopted a policy many years ago to ensure the integrity and defensibility of environmental reviews while emphasizing and implementing instructions in 40 CFR §§ 1500.4 and 1500.5 of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, to reduce excessive paperwork and delay in the environmental review process.

Guidance and Tools:

FAA Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions* and FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, already discusses ways to streamline the environmental review process for airport actions. Please contact APP-400 for further details.