



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20591

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell:

This letter is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) report to Congress under Section 187 (Aircraft Noise Exposure) of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law No. 115-254) (the Act).

Section 187 of the Act directs FAA as follows:

- (a) Review.--The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall conclude the Administrator's ongoing review of the relationship between aircraft noise exposure and its effects on communities around airports.*
- (b) Report.—*
  - (1) In general.--Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report containing the results of the review.*
  - (2) Preliminary recommendations.--The report shall contain such preliminary recommendations as the Administrator determines appropriate for revising the land use compatibility guidelines in part 150 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, based on the results of the review and in coordination with other agencies.*

Report on the relationship between aircraft noise exposure and its effects on communities:

On January 13, 2021, FAA published a 447-page report titled *Analysis of the Neighborhood Environmental Survey*<sup>1</sup> containing findings from the FAA Neighborhood Environmental Survey (survey), a multi-year effort to review the relationship between aircraft noise exposure and its effects on communities around U.S. airports. Concurrently, FAA also published a Federal Register Notice (FRN) titled *FAA Aircraft Noise Policy and Research Efforts* (86 FR 2722),<sup>2</sup> detailed FAA's broader aviation noise research program and included a summary of the findings from the survey. The FAA emailed this advance notice to the appropriate Senate and House Committees on January 12, 2021. The survey, notice, and this letter report address the requirements of Section 187 of the Act. The FAA conducted the survey to provide an updated

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.airporttech.tc.faa.gov/Products/Airport-Safety-Papers-Publications/Airport-Safety-Detail/ArtMID/3682/ArticleID/2845/Analysis-of-NES>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/13/2021-00564/overview-of-faa-aircraft-noise-policy-and-research-efforts-request-for-input-on-research-activities>

understanding of the level of annoyance from aircraft noise around U.S. airport communities. The survey findings indicate that a substantially higher percentage of people reported being highly annoyed over the entire range of aircraft noise exposure levels compared to earlier studies. This includes an increase in annoyance at lower noise levels.

While the survey results are compelling and will inform future FAA policy, FAA stated in its FRN that it will not make any determinations based on the findings of these research programs for FAA's noise policies, including any potential revised use of the Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) noise metric, until it has carefully considered public and other stakeholder input along with any additional research needed to improve the understanding of the effects of aircraft noise exposure on communities. The survey results do not require a shift in current policy and do not invalidate prior or ongoing project actions subject to FAA funding or approval. The FAA has determined that policy recommendations are not appropriate at this time; however, the agency will consider policy recommendations in its ongoing Noise Policy Review.

#### Noise Policy Review.

The FAA has begun a noise policy review process that will include the broad and inclusive stakeholder input needed to address how the research findings referenced in this letter may inform future noise policies. Potential recommendations for revising the Federal land use compatibility guidelines, their use under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 150, and their application to other FAA regulatory requirements and related policies will be considered as part of this process. For example, the noise policy review is examining the continued use of DNL as FAA's primary noise metric for assessing cumulative aircraft noise exposure governing project-level reviews. In addition, FAA is considering whether DNL 65 A-weighted decibels (dBA) should continue to represent the limit for residential land use compatibility and continue to be an element of the significant noise exposure threshold used by the Agency when examining noise impacts at the project level. In this effort, FAA is collaborating with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to design and carry out an inclusive and participatory policy review process that prioritizes input from substantially affected stakeholders, including local communities. In addition, FAA is consulting with the member agencies of the Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise as FAA completes the noise policy review.

The FAA is committed to working with all stakeholders in an inclusive, transparent, and equitable manner to review the civil aircraft noise policies.

A similar letter has been sent to the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Whitaker", with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael G. Whitaker  
Administrator



U.S. Department  
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**Federal Aviation  
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Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
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April 9, 2024

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Cruz:

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Michael G. Whitaker  
Administrator



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April 9, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves:

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April 9, 2024

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Larsen:

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