

## Report on Airport Noise Consultant Study Aug 17, 2020

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On Monday night August 17, 2020 there was an online briefing on the new technical consultant study that is being undertaken on Airport Noise by the ABC-X2 Consulting firm. It will be conducted over the next few months. There will be ways to submit questions and follow the study via the web sites noted below. This meeting was Chaired by Arlington County Board members Libby Garvey and Matt deFerranti and also attended by Ken Hartman from Montgomery County. Montgomery County is co-financing the study. Also attending were representatives from Fairfax County, the D.C. Government and a representative of the Quiet Skies Coalition. The full text of the briefing is available on line along with the actual briefing and the question and answers posed to the three consultants who were presenting.

**Key ways to access further information on this subject are as follows:**

<https://departments.arlingtonva.us/cmo/airport-noise/> (This is a way to get information and access the briefing of August 17, 2020 and the video tape of this presentation)

<http://dca.nowgen.net> (This will provide regional information about the noise study)

[Noise2020@arlingtonva.us](mailto:Noise2020@arlingtonva.us) (This allows one to pose questions and comments on the study)

The 1.5 hour long briefing went over the methodology for the study and its goals and objectives. The consultants explained that helicopter noise issues were not a part of the study and that they were only addressing airport noise. They explained their main focus was seeking to define route refinements that could lessen noise impact on citizenry. They emphasized that possible route refinements would likely be their main output of their study and on which they were seeking to get citizen input on their efforts.

In response to questions, the consultants explained that in terms of any route changes or refinements that this was a quite long process. They indicated that if there were a new agreed route path it would then be studied for safety and noise impact and that it would have to go through FAA study procedures that it would still take two to three years to implement and the COVID-19 pandemic would indeed slow the process.

There were many questions from attendees that asked about possible restrictions of noise at different times of day, different noise abatement processes at take-off (i.e. climb rate, speed levels, etc.), changing the current predominance of north bound take-offs and landings that is currently 60% to 65% of the traffic, and pursuing the implementation of quieter fleets, and better noise monitoring systems. There were other questions that were not addressed involved noise abatement and higher fines for exceeding noise limits for night time take-offs and landings.

Overall, this seeming emphasis by the consultants only on route refinements was a disappointment. This is because there is such small scope for improvements given the restricted areas associated with the White House and the Mall (i.e. PA56A), the very long time process to get FAA approvals, and the fact that even if the consultants come up with a clearly defined alternative with citizen approval, there is no

guarantee that the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority (MWAA) or the FAA would agree to pursue it.

In contrast the noise abatement and mitigation processes that were a key part of the initially proposed consultant study. This is what I had personally pursued when I was on the MWAA citizen advisory committee and had discussed with Ken Hartman of Montgomery and other representatives from Arlington, Falls Church, and Fairfax County when the consultant studies were first proposed some four years ago. Also I had understood that Congress Donald Beyer's staff felt this was a key avenue to pursue.

Reforms on noise abatement are significant in that they can follow a separate path. This could either be through applying pressure to the airlines, to MWAA officials, or U.S. Congressional Legislation. Things that I had hoped would be included in the work statement for consultants in this regard thus included:

- a. New and expanded noise monitors with timers that could identify and document airline flights that depart from flight path restrictions and make airlines subject to fines
- b. Increase fines for airlines for nighttime and early morning noise violations. The fine I believe is still \$5K per violation that was set decades ago. The fine should be set at \$50K or \$100K and indexed to inflation.
- c. Pressure on airlines to remove the noisiest jets such as the MD80 from DCA flight operations and publishing of their average fleet noise statistics. There might even be a contest for the airline with the quietest fleet.
- d. Financial support for research on electronic jet technology. This is an area where Europe is well ahead of the U.S. Incentives for airlines to adopt quieter jets.
- e. Financial support for schools and institutions to add sound insulation to buildings.

Many of these aspects and more could be addressed by legislative action that could potentially be much quicker than route changes that have to go through FAA safety processes.

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