Howard County Council

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At Last!
Plane Noise Relief is on the Horizon

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I am pleased to report that two recent developments will have positive impacts on those suffering from incessant plane noise resulting from the 2016 adoption of the NextGen navigation system at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI-Marshall) Airport:

- changes to the concentrated flight pathways and low-altitude flight procedures at BWI-Marshall Airport by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) after many years of inaction and
- passage of legislation that provides for community input to the Maryland Aviation Commission (MAC).

This has been a lengthy process. I have served on the BWI Roundtable as the County Council's representative for four and a half years, attended BWI Roundtable meetings every month at the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) headquarters in Linthicum Heights, and have served as vice chair of the Roundtable and as a member of the Legislative Committee. Many members of the BWI Roundtable have served since its inception in 2017. The BWI Roundtable's determination has finally paid off now that the FAA is taking steps to provide relief for affected communities and the State is recognizing that the health impacts of plane noise should be considered alongside the economic aspects of the aviation industry.

FAA's Action on Airplane Departures Helps Howard County

In January 2019, the Roundtable submitted changes to the FAA to the procedures and paths used by departing (SIDs) and arriving (STARs) planes. Most of Howard County's plane noise emanates from departing planes, while Anne Arundel County is primarily affected by arriving planes. It took three and half years for the FAA to review and decisively act upon the BWI Roundtable's submission.

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In April 2023, the FAA finally announced at a BWI Roundtable meeting that the SIDs modifications have been reviewed and have an anticipated publication date of May 16, 2024. STARs modifications will be published approximately one year later in May 2025. Veda Simmons, the FAA Community Engagement Officer, explained that publication is the date that the new procedures will become effective.

BWI Roundtable Successfully Adds Resident Input to Aviation Commission

During the 2023 General Assembly session, the Legislative Committee of the BWI Roundtable, of which I am a member, was successful in advocating for the passage of changes to the composition of the Maryland Aviation Commission (MAC) and a broadening of the Commission's scope beyond the aviation industry. Delegate Terri Hill and Senator Clarence Lam provided important leadership in sponsoring Senate Bill 0162 and House Bill 0204.

MAC was set up to improve and promote the role of the BWI-Marshall Airport, approve regulations for the all State airport operations, direct the Administration in developing and implementing airport management policy; and approve major capital projects. MAC consisted of nine members appointed by the Governor and included the air carrier and airport concessionaire industries, government representatives, and others with an interest in promoting the airport.



The 2023 General Assembly bills amended the law in the following ways:

- Requires the Commission to consider information from citizen groups, local governments, and plane-noise affected communities as well as environmental, health and community-related impacts;
- Increases the membership to 13 voting members with two additional members recommended by the Anne Arundel County Senate Delegation and two additional members recommended by the Howard County Senate Delegation;
- Requires members to receive an orientation on the Commission's responsibilities.

The legislative changes to MAC improve the opportunities for affected communities to provide feedback to decisionmakers. Click here to read the adopted law.

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