

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2016

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue S.W., Room 1022
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

We write to ask that you take all practicable steps to address the noise impacts of the NextGen initiative on California communities. While we appreciate that this airspace modernization program is intended to benefit airlines and their customers, these benefits may not outweigh the serious noise concerns reported by many other Californians.

Since your agency began implementing the NextGen flight paths in the San Francisco Bay Area, hundreds of residents have contacted our offices to describe how the sounds of more frequent and lower-altitude flyovers are disrupting their lives. In Southern California, where NextGen changes are still forthcoming, we are already hearing from constituents who believe that the new patterns were developed without adequate regard for noise impacts.

We recognize that optimizing airspace requires careful consideration of safety, efficiency, and environmental impacts, and noise is only one element in this complex balance. However, given that the new California flight patterns were not designed to address specific safety issues and will actually result in a slight increase in greenhouse gas emissions per flight operation (according to the environmental reviews performed for both the Northern and Southern California systems), it would not seem appropriate to increase the noise burden on communities.

We know that you are aware of these concerns, and we appreciate that your agency is examining potential remedies. We ask that you identify any remedies that would fairly and safely reduce overall noise impacts and implement them as quickly as possible. On a more fundamental level, as your agency reviews the metrics and thresholds used to identify significant noise impacts, we urge you to consider the best available science and the actual experience of people on the ground.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We look forward to an update on how your agency is addressing it.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator