

Washington N.O.I.S.E. Watch

A Publication of National Organization to Insure a Sound Controlled Environment (NOISE). NOISE, an affiliate of the National League of Cities has served for over 38 years as America's only nation-wide, community based association composed of locally elected officials representing thousands of citizens across the United States committed to reducing the impact of aviation noise on local communities. (www.aviation-noise.org email: contact@aviation-noise.org)

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Mark Your Calendars!

The annual National Organization to Insure a Sound-Controlled Environment (NOISE) **Legislative Forum** is being held Monday, March 10th in Washington, D.C. at the National League of Cities Annual Congressional City Conference. Come join us at 7:45 Am in the Hemisphere Room in the Hilton Washington Hotel and Towers. The legislative forum is a great opportunity to learn more about important aviation noise issues affecting your community. Also, this just announced, the **38th Annual NOISE Summer Conference and Aviation Noise Symposium** will be held on July 16th-18th at the Embassy Suites Dulles North in Dulles, VA. The conference will host a wide variety of experts on aviation noise from across the nation and will help bring together communities leaders who are dealing with this issue. Visit **aviation-noise.org** to register for this event and stay updated on future NOISE events and updates.

FAA Updates

A four-year reauthorization bill concerning the Federal Aviation Administration is close to clearing one of the hurdles holding it up in the Senate. The Senate Finance Committee to the Appropriations Committee has agreed to drop a provision that caused serious contention among authorizers when the bill (S.1300) moved to the Senate floor.

The House has already passed a four-year FAA reauthorization bill (H.R.2881), but the Senate has lagged behind, in part due to three

committees – Finance, Appropriations, and Commerce, Science and Transportation – which are fighting over what should be included in the final version of the bill. While the agency waits for the details to be finalized in the Senate, they are operating on a short-term extension (H.J. Res. 69).

The disagreement began with a provision in Finance's bill (S.2345) that would create a separate account for new revenue dedicated to modernizing the air traffic control system. The Finance measure would make the money deposited into that account mandatory, sending it directly to the FAA to spend and bypassing the appropriations process. This bypass provision is what angered appropriators and caused the opposition. It appears, however, that the disagreement is on its way to being resolved in the favor of appropriators. Nonetheless, Finance and Commerce must settle differences of their own before the bill can proceed.

There is consensus among industry insiders and Congress that the air transportation system needs significant upgrades in infrastructure and in transitioning to a satellite-based navigation system. Yet there is disagreement over how to pay for these needs.

Some are advocating for a new user fee on general aviation flights while others are convinced that the current financing mechanism of fuel taxes is working well. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007 (H.R. 2881) contains modest increases in jet fuel rate and gas tax to bring an additional \$150 million. The critical hurdle, at this juncture, is for the Senate to consider its bill so that legislators

can move to conference before reaching a final agreement.

Reauthorization of the FAA will be a top priority for Congress and should be completed sometime in 2008.

NOISE to serve on FAA Rule Making Committee

NOISE Executive Director Dennis McGrann was recently appointed as a new Assistant Chair on the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (ARAC). The ARAC, which provides a forum for the U.S. aviation community to review and make recommendations regarding changes in aviation policies, will afford **NOISE** the opportunity to provide direct information and insight while exchanging ideas with respect to proposed rules and existing rules that should be revised or eliminated in order to better serve our constituency.

Along with four other appointees, Mr. McGrann was appointed to serve for a specific technical subject area within the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee. He will serve as Assistant Chair of the Noise Certification Issue area which will work specifically with Helicopters, Propeller-Driven Small Airplanes, and Subsonic Transport and Turbojet Powered Airplanes.

Not only does this appointment represent a significant step forward in the Federal Aviation Administration's efforts to revitalize the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee, but also is important in assuring that the **National Organization to Insure a Sound-Controlled Environment** will continue its efforts of representing thousands of constituents throughout the United States committed to reducing the impact of aviation noise on local communities.

New National Policy to Allow Airports to Add Capacity and Reduce Congestion

Mary Peters, United States Transportation Secretary, recently announced a new national policy that would make it easier for overcrowded airports to add capacity and reduce delays by encouraging airlines to spread their flights more evenly throughout the day.

"Airports will now be able to more efficiently and effectively finance the kind of projects that will give travelers more options, airlines more opportunities, and cities like New York more visitors," Secretary Peters said.

Once finalized, the U.S. Department of Transportation would allow airports the flexibility to vary charges on landing fees on the time of day and the volume of traffic. This would replace the decades-old practice of charging aircraft based on the weight of the plane. This proposed change encourages congested airports in New York and across the country to move away from the old system.

The changes would allow airports to spread traffic more evenly throughout the day while allowing them to serve more passengers, reduce delays, and help avoid the need for sustained federal government intervention. In an effort to put forth the best possible policy, the change will be open to public comment for 45 days before it is finalized.

The changes to the FAA's Policy on Airport Rates and Charges would also allow airport operators to include the cost of projects designed to expand capacity in the new landing fees. Currently, airports can only include those costs after the projects have been completed. The change would lower the cost of construction projects by helping airports avoid hefty finance fees.

Washington .I.S.E. Watch

The new policy also would allow airport operators, like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, that operate multiple airfields to distribute landing fee revenue among those different facilities. For example, landing fees collected at LaGuardia, Newark, or JFK would be available for improvements to Stewart airport. As a result, more travelers may soon be able to take advantage of under-used airports, relieving pressure on the other airports and giving the city's travelers even more options.

"All told, these new market-based measures will help reduce congestion and increase airport investments," Secretary Peters said.

Airline Merger Updates

The increase in news concerning potential mergers within the airline industry has led many to question the effects on both the industry and its customers. While some corporate mergers have little effect on customers, when big airlines merge it creates headaches for travelers. Higher ticket prices, poorer service, and a possible switch in credit card procedures have many industry insiders concerned.

For the fractured airline industry, where nine major airlines fight for business within the United States, removing major competitors and adding flight schedules is a better way to survive ever increasing oil prices and the potential economic recession.

Remaining solvent through the possible recession has led Delta Airlines to enter formal talks with United and Northwest Airlines.

"By default or design, I think it's going to happen," said Gordon Bethune, the former head of Continental Airlines who has been advising some big airline investors on merger

prospects. "If it doesn't, they'll be back in the tank again."

But travelers and legislators remain worried. House Transportation Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar has already pledged to use all of his considerable political clout to pressure the Justice Department to block a possible Delta-Northwest merger.

"I would and I will and I am fighting this merger," said Oberstar, who has long opposed airline industry consolidation. "Mergers are bad for aviation."

Oberstar's committee, which has jurisdiction over civil aviation, plans to hold high-profile hearings to drum up broad political support to ensure that Delta and Northwest stay right where they are now.

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