

STATEMENT OF JOHN WESLER, DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY,
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES
AND TRANSPORTATION, CONCERNING AIRPORT NOISE. BURBANK,
CALIFORNIA. NOVEMBER 9, 1979.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

You have asked me to appear before you today to discuss the issues of airport noise and safety at Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport. I am pleased to have the opportunity to do so.

Today the problems of excessive aircraft noise plague literally millions of people near our Nation's airports, and present a formidable challenge to all of us in the aviation community. While aircraft noise is by no means a new problem, the problems have grown significantly with the passage of time due to steadily increasing levels of aircraft operation, and, all too often, increasing residential development around airports.

The Department of Transportation has long recognized the need to reduce all aspects of transportation noise, particularly aviation noise, and has worked diligently to do just that. Without belaboring past history, I believe it is worthwhile to recall briefly some of the actions we have already taken in this respect.

The Congress first gave us authority to control aircraft noise and sonic boom in 1968, through an amendment to the Federal Aviation Act of 1958. We acted quickly to impose strict noise standards for new design jet and transport airplanes in 1969. And the substantially quieter 747s, DC-10s, L-1011s, A-300s, and newer business jets demonstrate concretely the effectiveness of those standards. Since the initial issuance of Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 36, we have amended that regulation ten times over the ensuing ten years. Our amendments reflect a steady and progressive program to expand the scope of aviation noise controls and to increase their stringency as technology permitted. Thus, for example, the original noise standards were expanded in 1973 to apply to new domestic production of older design airplanes such as the 707s, 727s, DC-8s, DC-9s, and 737s.

In 1976, we extended the noise standards to all large subsonic turbojet airplanes, including those built before 1973, as a condition for operation in this country after 1984. In 1977, we increased the stringency of the noise limits for the next generation of aircraft, so that the 757s, 767s and future new models will be quieter still. I should mention that Administrator Bond has met with manufacturers to urge research and development of even more advanced technology engines to provide further noise reductions in the future.

Along the way, we have acted in other areas of aviation noise by specifying noise limits for new-design and new-production small propeller-driven airplanes, by prohibiting sonic booms over our country from civil aircraft, and by developing and requiring safe operational procedures which reduce noise impacts. We have also proposed noise standards for new-design and new-production helicopters. We believe this program represents an effective Federal role in limiting aviation noise impacts.

But, we are the first to recognize that our regulations have not "solved" the aviation noise problem. Regulation of aircraft noise alone will never eliminate completely noise problems, because aircraft, even the quieter new technology types, will always make some noise due to the nature of their propulsion system and their basic movement through the air. The use of safe noise abatement operational procedures can and do help, and serve to complement noise reduction at the source in our efforts to reduce the undesirable effects of aviation noise.

One example of our efforts to assist airport operators in controlling noise is our funding of airport noise and land-use compatibility studies throughout the Nation. In the DOT/FAA Aviation Noise Abatement Policy statement of November 1976, the

FAA pilot noise abatement planning program was announced, whereby the FAA would award planning grants for up to 25 studies per year, funds permitting. Four of these grants were awarded in Fiscal Year 1977, providing just over \$750,000 of Federal financing; 24 grants in FY 1978 totaling \$3.3 million in Federal financing; and 18 grants in FY 1979 totaling \$2.4 million in Federal-aid financing. These studies are intended to assist airport sponsors, local government officials, and airport and urban planners in developing noise control plans for those airports involved.

A second example is the development and availability of the FAA's computerized Integrated Noise Model, a straight-forward procedure for calculating or predicting noise impacts around airports and depicting those impacts relative to adjacent land areas so that incompatible land uses may be recognized and evaluated. Alternative noise abatement strategies and approaches may also be calculated and compared with current impact areas to determine their relative effectiveness in reducing noise problems. This flexible computer program allows calculation of noise impacts in several units of measure, including the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) measure specified by the State of California. Used in conjunction with the noise values tabulated and published by the FAA, the Integrated Noise Model allows airport proprietors to project

the noise conditions for their airports, and provides them with a basis for imposing use restrictions, based on aircraft noise characteristics, where those restrictions are needed to control noise impacts.

I should also mention some of the other things which we have done to help local noise abatement planning. We have sponsored a series of seminars and workshops on airport noise control planning, and on community involvement in that planning, for the benefit of not only our own people but airport staffs, and the public. We have published a number of technical guidance reports and brochures to explain the planning and environmental assessment process. And we work continuously with local groups and airport management to help them develop and implement meaningful and practical noise abatement plans. In this respect, the FAA's Chief Counsel personally appeared on May 29, before the Los Angeles City Council to testify in support of reasonable noise abatement measures proposed for Los Angeles International Airport; the FAA's Chief Counsel has met with airport officials in San Francisco and San Diego concerning noise problems; Administrator Bond has met with officials in Boston concerning airport noise and participated with Congressman Fary in public hearings in Chicago on the subject of airport noise; a meeting was held in September at FAA headquarters with airline representatives, Burbank airport officials, and the CAB to focus specifically on noise problems

at Burbank and to work for a practical solution; and there have been countless other meetings nationwide dealing with airport noise that have been attended by FAA headquarters or regional personnel. The point I want to stress, Mr. Chairman, is that the FAA is concerned about noise and has sought to work with local governments throughout the country in lessening the problem.

Let me focus now on Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport. As you know, the Department of Transportation has provided financial assistance to the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority, a body whose creation was specifically authorized in 1976 by the California State Legislature, to purchase the Hollywood-Burbank Airport from the Lockheed Corporation. I am sure the Subcommittee is aware that the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena were all instrumental in establishing the Airport Authority. The decision to approve Federal funding for the purchase of Hollywood-Burbank Airport was made by former Secretary Adams in 1977 after considerable analysis and study of the issues involved.

I think it fair to say that the main opposition to the continued operation of the Airport was from noise-impacted neighbors; this was not surprising nor were their concerns taken lightly since noise is a serious problem which deserves our full attention. And, I believe the environmental issues concerning the continued operation of the Airport were given

full consideration. But there were other factors which had to be taken into account. For one thing, support for the public acquisition of the Airport was shown by the efforts of the Cities of Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena in creating the Airport Authority for the express purpose of taking over the operation of the Airport; by the Mayor of Los Angeles, who expressed the willingness of the City to work with the Airport Authority to provide relief from the Airport's noise impact; by the citizens of Burbank, who, in 1976, voted nearly 4 to 1 in favor of acquisition of the Airport by the City of Burbank; by the State of California; and by numerous elected officials throughout the State who believed the airport was a vital link and played a major role in the air transportation system of Southern California and the State as a whole.

Other considerations also were taken into account in the decision to provide Federal funding for this project. For example, it was estimated that closure of the Airport would result in a loss of 600 to 1,000 jobs for businesses conducted at the Airport and, with consideration of indirect economic factors, an additional loss of 1,600 to 4,200 jobs would be experienced. Not all of these jobs would have been "lost" to the region since some relocation at other airports would likely occur, but many would have disappeared with a corresponding adverse economic impact on the community. Relocation of

flights would have caused additional congestion, both airside and groundside, at Los Angeles International Airport as well as other airports in the community, along with generating additional noise exposure to communities surrounding those airports. Closure of the Airport would also have caused an estimated increase of 8,000,000 vehicle miles traveled per year, resulting in an increase of over one-half million gallons of petroleum fuel use, along with generating an estimated 575 tons of additional pollutants annually in the Los Angeles County area.

I should note, Mr. Chairman, that these factors as well as others were fully set out in the comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement we prepared before the decision was reached to provide Federal funding for the acquisition of the Airport. I would further point out that the adequacy of the EIS we prepared was challenged in Federal Court, with summary judgment granted the United States.

In short, many important factors were weighed by the Department of Transportation, and the conclusion reached that the Airport should remain open - a course of action that necessitated Federal funding.

The fact that we reached that decision to provide Federal funding, however, does not mean that we were not concerned with the adverse noise impact on the surrounding community. To the contrary, we, as well as State and local government, have taken seriously the noise impact of this Airport on its neighbors. The State, in enacting the law which authorized creation of the Joint Powers Authority (Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority), expressly provided that the Authority "shall not permit or authorize any activity in conjunction with the airport which results in an increase in the size of the noise impact area. . . ." In adopting Resolution 17390, the City of Burbank expressed its commitment to prevent an increase in noise impact areas either as a result of increased airplane operations or capital improvements undertaken at the Airport.

The Department of Transportation, in executing the grant agreement with the Airport Authority for financial assistance, expressly supported this position and required the Authority to covenant that "to the extent feasible, it shall not authorize any action . . . which will increase the noise levels and/or noise impact boundaries beyond those existing as of the date of said EIS." Further, the grant agreement incorporates the sponsor's agreement to implement various other noise abatement actions.

The restrictions, in the interest of noise abatement, placed on the operation of Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport by State, local, and Federal governments are among the most stringent in the country. Nevertheless, they do not "solve" the noise problem; for the time being, their primary impact is in confining the spread of the noise contours, to assure that noise conditions would get no worse.

In support of the airport proprietor's voluntary noise abatement program the FAA has established a runway use program. Basically it provides for the use of Runway 7 for late night arrivals and Runway 25 for departures. Also, departures make no turns until reaching 1,500 feet prior to turning enroute. Additionally, as a result of the Airport's voluntary curfew, there are no scheduled air carrier flights between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM in the morning.

The Airport Authority has also taken other actions to address its noise problem. An eleven member "Noise Abatement Technical Advisory Group" composed of airport management, FAA representatives, the airport's consultant, air carrier representatives, general aviation fixed based operators and public representatives formulates technical procedures for mitigating airport noise. Public input to the group is

presented through monthly public meetings held by the Airport Authority.

A permanent noise monitoring system is presently being acquired by the Airport Authority and scheduled to be operational by early 1980. Currently, the Airport Authority is employing a portable noise monitoring system to generate quarterly noise monitor reports.

The Airport Authority has enacted a rule specifying that no air carrier may increase operations above the March 10, 1979, level without written approval of the Authority. The validity of the rule is currently being challenged by one of the airlines through a civil action in the California Superior Court. The trial will be held on January 7, 1980.

One potentially mitigating factor I should point out is that the Administration's airport and airway legislative proposal, currently pending before the Congress, would permit the use of airport grants for the soundproofing of schools, hospitals, and public health facilities near airports and for the acquisition of noise monitoring equipment. Further, the legislation would explicitly encourage planning to address noise problems and to develop specific abatement actions. I might note,

Mr. Chairman, that local communities would be eligible under our bill to apply for funds for purposes of noise planning. Beyond that, we are continuing to work to develop new concepts and means of abating airplane noise such as our computerized Integrated Noise Model.

I mentioned earlier that, in September, representatives of the CAB, FAA, Airlines, and the Burbank Airport Authority met to discuss the airport noise problem in Burbank. Although no consensus was reached at that meeting, both the CAB and the FAA are fully confident that a reasonable solution can be developed for Burbank which will promote fair entry to the Airport, in accordance with the purposes of the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, while at the same time accommodating the need to assure that noise is not increased at the Airport. To that end, the CAB outlined various possible alternatives in a letter of May 24, 1979, to the Director of Airport Services at Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport. That letter was prepared by the CAB in consultation with the FAA's Chief Counsel and the FAA's Office of Environment and Energy.

I should also note that we recently received and made public a comprehensive study on slot allocation methods, prepared by a consultant and funded jointly by FAA and CAB. This study

involves concepts that are directly transferable to noise allocation. We are currently reviewing the study, and will continue to work with the CAB to develop workable solutions to the issue of fair airport access and slot allocation. You may be assured that we and the CAB will be working together with the Airport proprietor here to assist the Airport in meeting its environmental needs without frustrating the competitive purposes of the Deregulation Act.

Before I complete my testimony, Mr. Chairman, I would like to use Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport as an example of the adverse impact which certain proposed legislation, now pending before the Congress, will have on the airport noise problem. This legislation, commonly referred to as the "noise bill", would have the effect of drastically undercutting our noise compliance regulations which were issued in December 1976. I should note that Administrator Bond has been a strong opponent of the noise bill, and that he appeared before the House Aviation Subcommittee in April to urge that the legislation not be enacted.

While the proposed legislation has a number of unacceptable aspects, I will concentrate on only one. The Environmental Impact Statement for the purchase of the Burbank-Glendale-

Pasadena Airport found that, if no noise abatement actions are taken there, approximately 26,000 airport neighbors will reside within the 65 CNEL noise impact contours in 1985--in effect, that many neighbors will endure undesirable noise exposures. But if compliance with our 1976 noise regulation is required, and no other noise abatement procedures are implemented, the number of equally noise-impacted neighbors will decrease to approximately 17,300. In other words, our noise compliance regulation alone will remove 43% of the projected noise-impacted neighbors from the 65 CNEL contours around Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport, and will decrease the overall noise impact for all neighbors. Passage of the noise bill would prevent that noise reduction benefit. We urge the Members of the Subcommittee to support us in our efforts to resist the passage of this legislation which will have an adverse effect not only on this community but on airport neighbors throughout the country.

In closing, I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that we in the Department of Transportation are making every reasonable effort to minimize the impact of aviation noise and will continue to do so. But, it must be recognized that there exists no one simple solution. Comprehensive efforts, relying both on Federal and local actions, must be undertaken and, even then,

the adverse impact of aviation noise cannot be totally eliminated.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my prepared statement. My associates and I will be pleased to respond to questions you have concerning aviation noise or air safety.