

STATEMENT OF DALE E. MCDANIEL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND INTERNATIONAL AVIATION, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING AVIATION NOISE. OCTOBER 2, 1990.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss for you our overall efforts to reduce aircraft noise. The Department of Transportation and the FAA recognize that aircraft noise is a significant concern in many communities throughout the United States. These concerns also pose an equally significant concern for the Nation's aviation system.

Our aviation system is an increasingly important part of our national economy. Eighty-seven percent of all domestic passenger air travel in 1989 was interstate and virtually all overnight air cargo shipments moved in interstate commerce. Aviation now contributes 5.6 percent of our Nation's GNP and 1 out of every 14 civilian jobs in the United States is dependent on the aviation industry. In addition, the aviation system is an international system that supports and assists United States' business to compete in the global economy. Demand for U.S. domestic air travel alone is projected to increase by at least 60 percent by the year 2000 and domestic and international air cargo shipments are expected to increase 340 percent during the same period.

The aviation system's ability to respond to this demand has been

seriously affected by the reactions of local communities to aircraft noise. Local communities have been successful in pressuring airport operators to impose operating restrictions on existing facilities as well as opposing proposed airport expansions or development of new airports. By our count, 47 major airport capacity enhancing projects were either stopped, altered, or significantly delayed as a result of noise concerns.

We are concerned that these noise constraints threaten the ability of the aviation system to respond to present and future demands. At the same time, we recognize that these operating restrictions represent a response to genuine noise concerns. We estimate that 3 million people currently reside in areas where noise levels exceed the standard for compatible land use.

Some have suggested that the noise problem exists because the Federal government has not acted. I disagree. The 3 million residents in serious noise impact areas are far fewer than the 7 million living in such areas in the mid-1970s. We believe that by the year 2010 there will be just over 1.1 million persons living in serious noise impact areas. These dramatic gains result almost exclusively from the introduction of quieter aircraft. We completed the phaseout of the noisiest, Stage 1, aircraft in 1986. That resulted from a decision taken by the Federal government in 1986. Shortly after that, in 1977, the Federal

government mandated that all newly certificated designs must meet even more stringent Stage 3 standards. As a result, the aviation industry is well underway in converting the fleet from Stage 2 to Stage 3. Currently 40 percent of the U.S. civil fleet is Stage 3. When an all Stage 3 fleet is achieved existing technology will have been exhausted. That technology was developed was developed in FAA and NASA supported programs ten to twenty-five years ago. There is no proven technology to achieve substantial additional aircraft noise reduction and this creates a significant problem in achieving further progress.

Secretary Skinner has pledged Federal leadership in finding and implementing workable solutions in achieving progress and we are moving aggressively in several areas. They are:

1. Continue research to identify new technology to reduce aircraft noise;
2. Improving compatible land use;
3. Review concerns with the standard noise metric;
4. Implementation of new procedures to screen the environmental impact of air traffic changes above 3,000 feet;  
and
5. Strengthen FAA emphasis on environmental concerns.

I would like to briefly address our work in each of these areas for you. With respect to new technology, Administrator Busey and

NASA Administrator Truly have recently agreed to develop a cooperative aircraft noise reduction technology development program. In addition, we have additionally created a noise subcommittee of our R,E&D Advisory Committee. While we will continue to work with NASA and others, it should be made clear that it will not be easy to develop significantly quieter aircraft engines. Further noise reduction is technically a very difficult challenge. However, most experts agree that significant results are attainable. Realistically, even if research proves successful, we cannot expect quieter aircraft until well into the next century.

That leads to our work regarding compatible land use. Communities must find new and creative ways to manage better the land use around airports, while avoiding operational constraints which limit the capacity of existing airports and threaten our ability to add to new capacity. We will work with impacted communities and industry to encourage development of local tools for ensuring compatible land use. We will also work with local communities and airport users to deter local actions that are unreasonable, arbitrary, discriminatory, or undo burden on interstate commerce or otherwise unreasonably interfere with system efficiency or increase system cost.

Since the authorization of the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) in 1982, over \$26.3 million has been granted to airport sponsors

to develop noise compatibility plans and \$848.6 million to carry out recommendations in those plans. As you know, under AIP, a minimum of 10 percent of available funds is set aside for noise compatibility planning and program implementation. The largest share of these funds is used for acquiring noise impacted land adjacent to airports. The other major implementation strategy is soundproofing of schools and residences.

We are also aware that not everyone is satisfied with the existing standard method of measuring noise impact. As you will recall, that metric, day-night average sound level or DNL was developed in response to the 1979 Aviation Safety and Noise Abatement Act. In recent years, the adequacy of this metric has been challenged by some communities.

As a result of the concern, FAA and EPA have agreed to a joint project to evaluate the DNL metric. In addition, FAA Deputy Administrator Barry Harris and EPA Deputy Administrator Henry Habicht have agreed to work with DOD, VA, HUD, CEQ and the Department of Justice to examine our policy with regard to a number of other concerns regarding the noise impact of aviation. They are:

- o the extent of impacts outside 65 Ldn that should be reviewed in an environmental impact statement;

- o the manner in which noise impacts are determined, including whether aircraft noise impacts are fundamentally different from other transportation noise impacts;
- o the manner in which noise impacts are described;
- o the range of FAA-controlled mitigation options (noise abatement and flight track procedures) that are analyzed; and
- o the relationship of the Airport Noise Compatibility Program (Part 150 process) to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, including ramifications to the EIS process if they are separate, and exploration of the means by which the two processes can be handled to maximize benefits.

While the DNL metric has been criticized, we believe it is the best available indicator of aviation noise annoyance. It has proven remarkably successful since being adopted ten years ago as the national standard. If there are changes to that standard which would improve its usefulness, we would certainly support them. It should be made clear, however, that we will not move away from a standard approach to a series of different measures at individual airports.

We believe that many of the criticisms of the standard noise metric are in reality criticisms that not everyone who is annoyed by aviation noise lives within the 65 Ldn contours. That leads to our fourth activity on new screening procedures.

In recent months, the FAA has become increasingly aware that there are situations where noise levels outside of the Ldn 65 contour may create considerable controversy. This was certainly the case with regard to our Expanded East Coast Plan. We seriously underestimated the reaction to air route changes which have significantly improved the efficiency of New York area airports. Considerable time and effort are now being devoted to mitigating those effects as much as possible, although it is clear that once a negative reaction to noise has been created it is virtually impossible to recover.

We hope to avoid the New Jersey experience in the future. To assist in this, two weeks ago we issued additional guidance in assessing increases in aviation noise exposure to air traffic changes above 3,000 feet. This guidance is built on the premise that regardless of the ambient noise level, a sudden, sharp increase in that level may cause considerable adverse public reaction. It will be used by FAA in planning future route changes and will help to minimize noise impact.

In addition to these operational measures, FAA has issued internal guidance regarding management of environmental responsibilities. This guidance signifies an important first step in building a strong environmental reputation for the FAA. It initiates changes designed to heighten the agency's sensitivity to environmental concerns from planning through implementation.

I recognize that the Federal government's past record and our recent initiatives leave unanswered a number of questions of interest to this Subcommittee. Such questions as facilitating the orderly and expeditious phase out of Stage 2 commercial aircraft, and avoiding capacity limiting restrictions are difficult policy issues. While these and related issues are of considerable interest to the Administration, we have not concluded our own deliberations on what, if any, additional Federal initiatives may be desirable. Mr. Chairman, we commend you for providing a forum for a public discussion of these issues and believe they will be helpful in shaping our own views.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.