

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2015

The Honorable Michael P. Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

We write to you again about ongoing concerns related to flight-path changes implemented at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport in September of last year. As you are aware, as a result of those changes, many homes around the airport have experienced a substantial increase in the frequency of overhead flights, accompanied by an increase in flight noise. Many of our constituents who live and work near Sky Harbor Airport have been dissatisfied with the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) lack of engagement with the community during the decision-making process that preceded the implementation of these changes.

As a result, we have drafted legislation that would address these concerns by requiring community outreach and consultation on these changes. These policy and legislative efforts continue and would ideally be complemented by efforts by the FAA to address these frustrations.

We are aware of the steps that the FAA has taken after the flight paths were changed, including meeting with city representatives and the Phoenix Performance Based Navigation (PBN) Working Group. While we appreciate the time the FAA has spent on this matter, we remain concerned about the process used in implementing the PBN flight procedures.

We continue to support FAA efforts to improve the safety, efficiency, and future operations of our nation's airspace through NextGen. But, the events surrounding Phoenix Sky Harbor demonstrate that how NextGen is implemented must be improved. It appears the FAA is aware of the need for further refinements and, through collaboration with the RTCA NextGen Advisory Committee (NAC), continues to consider ways to guarantee the future success of NextGen implementation.

The FAA has acknowledged the importance of community participation in its implementation of NextGen. According to the FAA's response to recommendations contained in the NAC's October 2014 "Blueprint for Success to Implementing Performance Based Navigation," the FAA concurred with the recommendation that "potential (or perceived) noise and/or community impacts associated with proposed PBN implementations should be evaluated from the outset of implementation planning effort" and acknowledges "the need for representatives from the respective airport authorities on the PBN workgroups beginning in the

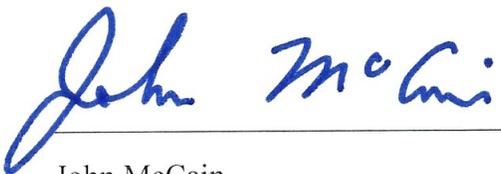
conceptual phases” and that “participation of representatives from the respective airport authorities is a critical component of successfully implementing new PBN initiatives.” The FAA further stated it is “undertaking an agency-wide effort to revise the *FAA Community Involvement Manual* to provide a high-level document that serves as a guide for a broad range of community involvement efforts,” concluding further that moving forward “regardless of the level of NEPA review completed, the FAA will utilize its expanded community involvement strategy for all PBN implementation.”

In light of these acknowledgements, and given the FAA’s ongoing work to improve community outreach and participation in flight path changes, we request a response to the following questions:

1. Was there formal notification, such as a letter, to the airport about the nature and timing of the September 2014 flight-path changes that would have allowed for the City of Phoenix Aviation Department and airport to facilitate community engagement?
2. How did the FAA’s community outreach efforts throughout the RNAV flight-path changes in Phoenix differ from its outreach to other communities that were also dealing with RNAV changes at different airports?
3. Did the process and participation of representatives from the airport authority and the community surrounding Phoenix Sky Harbor meet best practices that have been identified through the NextGen Advisory Committee (NAC) process or the FAA’s ongoing analysis of community involvement efforts? If not, why not?
4. What are the FAA’s current plans for outreach in Phoenix related to the September 2014 RNAV flight-path changes, including any public meetings?
5. How will public, airport, and stakeholder engagement in the Phoenix Metroplex differ from what took place in Phoenix prior to the September 2014 RNAV flight-path changes?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator



Jeff Flake
United States Senator