



For Immediate Release

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Massport and FAA Work to Reduce Overflight Noise

Several test projects designed to maintain safety and reduce noise concentration

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) today announced preliminary results of months of collaboration to develop test projects that are designed to help address the concentration of noise that some residents face because of aircraft flight procedures.

The two agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to frame the process for analyzing opportunities to incrementally reduce noise through changes or amendments to Performance Based Navigation.

Over the last several years, the implementation of the new Performance Based Navigation (PBN) procedures – including Area Navigation, or RNAV – has resulted in flights becoming more concentrated because of the more precise nature of the technology. This has generated community concerns about persistent noise in specific locations. Previously, flights were more spread out because planes were using less precise navigation systems. Massport has proposed several ideas for a test program with the FAA to better understand the implications of the flight concentrations and to study possible strategies to address the neighborhood concerns. The FAA has agreed to study Massport’s ideas for a test program.

Such cooperation -- which itself is a first in the nation project between the FAA and an airport operator -- includes analyzing the feasibility of changes to some RNAV approaches and departures from Boston Logan.

"I'm encouraged that Massport and the FAA are committed to taking steps to abate airplane noise around Logan Airport," said Sen. Edward J. Markey. "I look forward to working with all parties involved to ensure that aircraft noise doesn't keep our families up at night."

"While this announcement is a step in the right direction toward reducing the significant airplane noise affecting communities in Massachusetts, more needs to be done," Senator Elizabeth Warren said. "The dramatic increase in airplane noise in certain cities and towns raises serious concerns about its impact on our environment and on families' health, and I'm going to keep working with the congressional delegation and with our federal and state partners to address this problem."

The FAA and Massport are committing to: (1) analyze the feasibility, (2) measure/model the benefits/impacts of, and (3) test and develop an implementation plan which will include environmental analysis and community/public outreach.

"Families in Milton, South Boston, Dorchester, Hull, and other towns are dealing with a disproportionate burden of airplane noise and communities across the 8th Congressional District have been unequivocal in their

calls for changes to the flight paths,” said Congressman Stephen F. Lynch. “Since 2014, we have worked closely with affected residents, our local elected officials, Massport, and the FAA to find solutions to address the concerns about noise, health, and environmental impacts. As this process moves forward, I urge both Massport and the FAA to place a strong emphasis on community engagement in these pilot studies and find strategies that reduce noise and improve the quality of life for our local communities.”

“While it has taken far too long to get to this point, I do appreciate the FAA and Massport's willingness to try different ideas,” said Congressman Mike Capuano. “Not everything will work, but there will be lessons learned from failures and successes. Determining what works best will ultimately lead to improvement for those living in the area.”

“Airplane noise pollution can be a serious quality of life issue,” Congresswoman Katherine Clark. “Families I’ve met are concerned and frustrated with the persistent noise pollution that interferes with essential activities like sleeping, studying, and doing business. I’m encouraged by this partnership, and I am particularly encouraged that RNAV departures from runway 33L will be studied. I urge the FAA and Massport to continue listening to, and learning from, our residents whose lives are impacted by noise pollution.”

The FAA and the Authority will, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), agree to each party’s specific roles, responsibilities and contributions as part of a test program to reduce overflight noise at Boston Logan International Airport that is related to the FAA’s implementation of Performance Based Navigation procedures, including RNAV. Specifically, the MOU will:

- Identify specific proposed ideas to reduce overflight noise from RNAV concentration
- Assess the feasibility of specific noise abatement operational or procedural design ideas
- Design and model feasible ideas to assess the level of benefits and potential impacts for testing and/or implementation
- Incorporate community outreach and feedback in the process

“If these ideas are successful, we may be able to use the lessons learned to address challenges in neighborhoods around other large metropolitan airports,” said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. “We are working on many initiatives to reduce aviation’s effect on the environment, and this is an important part of that effort.”

Because modern aircraft are quieter, noise levels are lower now than at any time in the jet age. Even as Boston Logan International Airport continues to break passenger records, the number of flights at the airport is 100,000 less than historic highs. However, some residents who live under an RNAV approach or departure track face a persistent level of noise while the procedure is in use. The FAA selects runway configurations based on wind direction, wind speed, weather, and other factors. Generally, it is safest for planes to take off and land heading into the wind.

The collaboration between the FAA, Massport, the Massport Community Advisory Committee, and scientists at MIT has identified several preliminary distinct areas of study to explore whether changes in the RNAV system will result in community noise benefits without compromising safety.

“On behalf of the Massport CAC, I welcome this initiative from Massport and the FAA,” said David Carlon, chair of the Community Advisory Committee. “As the advisory board to Massport and the state that gives voice

to communities impacted by Massport's operations, the Massport CAC believes that noise from Logan overflights and the RNAV concentration should be addressed regionally.”

The preliminary areas of study could include:

- Using higher altitudes for arrivals and departures where applicable, which could have benefits throughout the metro region.
- Looking at the feasibility of reducing the persistent level of noise from RNAV departures through a case study analysis of a major departure procedure from Runway 33L, which would benefit communities west of Logan Airport, including Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge and Watertown. If successful, this idea could reduce the persistent noise for some residents.
- RNAV separation requirements – Currently departure and arrival procedures require a separation of three miles for head-to-head operations. This suggested study would maintain the safety requirement, but examine how to incorporate a greater number of over-water operations. The proposed area of study will look at maintaining the three-mile separation between the arrival stream on Runway 27 and the departure stream from Runways 22R/22L, which makes a sharp left turn as aircraft depart and fly over Boston Harbor. This procedure could produce benefits for South Boston and Hull.
- Accelerate adoption of RNAV special procedures. Airlines can and do propose RNAV special procedures. Currently, other air carriers cannot always easily adopt the approved RNAV special procedures that are made available for “public” use. At Boston Logan for example, JetBlue proposed a late night RNAV special procedure for Runway 33L arrivals that would provide noise benefits by having aircraft fly an initial visual approach to avoid going over land wherever possible. Massport will work with FAA air traffic controllers and the airlines to increase use. This effort is already underway and could benefit the South Shore and Hull.
- Analyze alternative RNAV designs that would bring aircraft over more compatible land use. At Boston Logan, the test case will examine Runway 4R Arrivals, looking at the feasibility of a curved approach, for example, such as along the Southeast Expressway or Boston's inner harbor. Neighborhoods that could benefit are parts of Milton and Dorchester.
- In order to improve data collection for communities and the FAA, use real-world single-event noise data from communities under RNAV tracks to develop a supplemental metric to measure and track the concentration of flights due to RNAV technology. These metrics would better identify the potential for community understanding, support or opposition to proposed procedural changes. The proposed pilot testing will use these supplemental metrics.

“Massport is committed to being a good neighbor and being able to connect Massachusetts to the global economy,” said Massport CEO Thomas P. Glynn. “I am proud of the Massport team that worked with the FAA, the Community Advisory Committee, and folks at MIT to put these ideas on the table so they can be tested.”

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The Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) owns and operates Boston Logan International Airport, public terminals in the Port of Boston, Hanscom Field, and Worcester Regional Airport. Massport is a financially self-sustaining public authority whose premier transportation facilities generate more than \$15 billion annually, and enhance and enable economic growth and vitality in New England. For more information please visit massport.com.

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