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TASK FORCE
Vice Chair

May 31, 2015

Michael P. Huerta, Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Re: SFO Noise Concerns

Dear Administrator Huerta:

Thank you for an opportunity to follow up on our recent conversation about the impact of aircraft noise on my constituents. As you know, San Francisco Airport is in my Congressional district and many of my constituents are adversely impacted by noise from SFO.

I understand that the San Francisco Bay Area presents complex aviation challenges with three major airports and many general aviation airports as well as problematic terrain and wide-spread, noise-sensitive residential areas. While safety can never be compromised, I trust that an analysis of procedures and options, we can identify changes to enhance the quality of life for our residents impacted by the SFO noise.

Recently, the FAA has been implementing NextGen. The FAA's representative to the San Francisco Airport Community Roundtable, Ms. Patty Daniels, stated that changes in flight paths due to NextGen would not be designed for noise improvement purposes. However, she also stated that NextGen would likely reduce noise to some degree by eliminating level flight segments flown at high engine power settings to allow a continuous descent at idle or flight idle. In addition, she indicated that NextGen was intended to reduce traffic conflicts and thus would potentially reduce vectoring upon approach to, and departure from, SFO. Vectoring over noise sensitive areas of the Peninsula is a major problem.

Major complaints in my district concerning noise are associated with two airport arrival paths and two airport departure paths.

The problematic departures are the SFO GAP, MOLEN and other straight-out 28L/R departures and the PORTE and OFFSHORE departing runways 1L/R. While the GAP and MOLEN departures are needed for heavy planes flying internationally, increased use of other 28R/L departures (weather and aircraft operations permitting) such as the SHORELINE 28 or the NIITE RNAV 28 departure for other aircraft may show a noise reduction.

For southbound flights taking off from 1L/R, increased use of the SSTITK RNAV departure for daytime operations and the NIITE RNAV for late night operations should provide significant relief for residents of Brisbane and other north county residents. Unfortunately, ongoing noise complaints coupled with evidence from the FAA's own analysis of flights over Brisbane strongly suggest that perhaps these preferred departures aren't being implemented as frequently as might be possible.

The first arrival issue is vectoring in the vicinity of Woodside VOR related to the BIG SUR and SERFR RNAV arrivals as well as the oceanic arrivals and arrivals from the north. The second arrival problem is overflight of Foster City during visual approaches. What follows are discussion points relating to these problematic departures and arrivals.

FOSTER CITY OVERFLIGHT

The QUIET BRIDGE VISUAL and the TIP TOE VISUAL charted approaches provide adjacent, but separated final approach flight paths to 28L/R which can be used in good weather. In addition, an aircraft can be cleared for a visual (non-charted) approach to 28L/R. Whereas the QUIET BRIDGE flight path keeps aircraft well clear of Foster City, the TIP TOE final approach path overflies a portion of the city. And an aircraft flying a non-charted visual approach is responsible to accurately follow controller's instructions which are usually given to minimize Foster City overflight.

1. When landing on 28L/R when weather is adequate for visual approaches, what percentage of flights landing on runway 28L/R are cleared for each of the types of visual approaches (QUIET, TIP TOE, or non-charted Visual?) and which are cleared for other approaches such as ILS or RNAV?
2. What percentage of each type of visual approach which results in a noise intrusion as indicated by transiting the "red box" on noise abatement charts? For those airlines which frequently fly over the "red box" in Foster City, does the FAA have a protocol to work with the airlines' Chief Pilots or training departments to educate the pilots?
3. Has there ever been research to determine if the charted visual flight paths for both 28L and 28R could be "moved" very slightly northward (with sufficient time to line-up with the runways before landing) so as to allow two charted visual paths that would be well clear of Foster City?
4. What suggestions would you make to reduce aircraft noise in this area?

ARRIVALS in the WOODSIDE AREA

Aircraft arriving from the south (BIG SUR or SERFR RNAV) normally would be well clear of the Woodside VOR area, but vectoring related to the BIG SUR or SERFR RNAV arrivals as well as Oceanic arrivals and arrivals from the north, frequently fly aircraft over hillside homes in the area of the Woodside VOR – and often at unacceptably low altitudes. Implementation of the NextGen SERFR RNAV arrival was touted as the method to effectively separate incoming aircraft to eliminate or minimize the need for vectoring. However, empirical observations of actual traffic flow on the SERFR RNAV arrival show an amount of vectoring that appears to be similar to the amount of vectoring done prior to the implementation of the SERFR RNAV.

1. What percentage of aircraft approaching SFO from the south are cleared on the SERFR versus the BIG SUR?
2. Of those aircraft flying the SERFR, what percentage of the flights remain on the SERFR to MENLO without any vectoring?
3. Of those aircraft being vectored off the SERFR, what are the top reasons that vectoring becomes necessary?
4. Of those aircraft flying the SERFR RNAV or arriving from Oceanic or from the north, what percentage of these flights are receiving vectors that take them over the vicinity of the Woodside VOR?
5. What suggestions would you make to reduce aircraft noise in this area?

28L/R STRAIGHT OUT DEPARTURES

Runways 28L/R departures via the GNNRR RNAV, GAP, MOLEN or other straight-out 28 departures create significant noise impacts to the communities which underlie the straight-out flight path.

1. How often are alternatives to the 28L/R straight-out flight path offered to the flight crew? (weather and operations permitting)
2. For what percentage of the Runway 28L/R departures, does ATC offer (or simply re-clear the aircraft) for the SHORELINE 28 departure or the NIITE RNAV 28 departure – even when the direction of flight is oceanic?
3. For what percentage of the Oceanic/Hawaiian departures, does ATC query the flight crew as to whether they can accept runway 1R? (We understand that this will be a low number since the controllers are well versed in the typical needs of certain aircraft departing for Asian destinations at high weights requiring the longer runways 28L/R.)
4. What suggestions would you make to reduce aircraft noise in this area?

1L/R SOUTHBOUND ROUTE DEPARTURES

The SSTIK RNAV and NIITE RNAV departures take advantage of NextGen capabilities and would be of particular help in reducing nighttime noise in many communities: San Bruno, South San Francisco, Daly Colma, Daly City, and Brisbane. Using the SSTIK RNAV departure, the aircraft fly slight further northwest up the Bay before turning over land to head south. Using the NIITE RNAV departure, aircraft departing runway 1L/R fly further northwest up the Bay to gain substantial altitude and almost completely avoid residential overflight instead of receiving the traditional vectoring over land at low altitudes over extensive residential areas, including Brisbane.

However, since the NIITE RNAV departure procedure was implemented November 13, 2014, there has been no significant reduction in Brisbane night noise events, implying that planes simply aren't making good use of this option. In fact, the latest report on Brisbane noise events for April 2015, compiled by the FAA (attached) shows 179 events, a disappointing *increase* from the previous month of March, 2015 at 163 events. In addition, neither these numbers nor any others in the FAA's report signals progress since October 2012 when I first discussed this matter with the FAA. To help us understand why there has been no sustained improvement regarding the community of Brisbane since October 2012, and by inference why more planes are not using the SSTIK RNAV and NIITE RNAV departures, I respectfully request the following information.

With regard to the 1L/R NIITE RNAV departure:

1. What percentage of southbound aircraft departing runway 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. are RNAV-equipped?
2. What percentage of RNAV-equipped southbound aircraft which are departing runways 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. are *filing* for the NIITE RNAV departure vs. other departures? If a southbound RNAV-equipped aircraft files for the PORTE or OFFSHORE departing runways 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., does ATC automatically transmit a clearance or unilaterally give verbal clearance to the aircraft to fly the NIITE instead of the originally filed PORTE or OFFSHORE departure?
3. What percentage of RNAV-equipped southbound aircraft which are departing runways 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. are being *cleared* for the NIITE departure? What are the reasons that some aircraft are not being cleared for the NIITE?
4. What percentage of RNAV-equipped aircraft departing runways 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. *accept* the NIITE? Are there any known reasons why the NIITE departures have been declined by the pilots-in-command?
5. What percentage of RNAV-equipped aircraft departing runways 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. *begin* the NIITE departure? What percentage cross MDBAY? What percentage Cross HUSSH? What percentage cross NIITE?
6. If an RNAV-equipped aircraft departing 1L/R between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. begins the NIITE departure and is later vectored or given a "direct to" somewhere other than the next NIITE RNAV waypoint: In what general compass direction is it being vectored? What was the altitude when the vector was initiated? Who was the initiating party for the vector (ATC or pilot?). If ATC initiated, what was the reason for turning the aircraft off the NIITE? If pilot initiated, what was the reason that ATC approved the request? What was the approximate aircraft altitude when crossing from the Bay to the shoreline?
7. What suggestions would you make to reduce aircraft noise in this area?

1L/R SOUTHBOUND ROUTE DEPARTURES (continued)

With regard to the SSTIK RNAV departure:

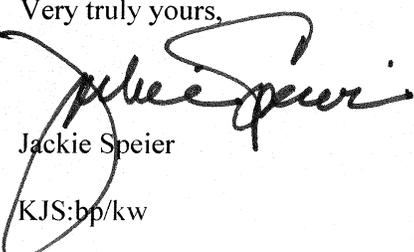
1. What percentage of southbound aircraft departing runway 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. are RNAV-equipped?
2. What percentage of RNAV-equipped southbound aircraft which are departing runways 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. are filing for the SSTIK RNAV departure vs. other departures? If a southbound destination RNAV-equipped aircraft departing runways 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. files for a PORTE or OFFSHORE, does ATC automatically transmit or unilaterally give verbal clearance to the aircraft to fly the SSTIK instead of the originally filed PORTE or OFFSHORE departure?
3. What percentage of RNAV-equipped southbound aircraft which are departing runways 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. are being *cleared* for the SSTIK departure? What are the reasons that some aircraft are not being cleared for the SSTIK?
4. What percentage of RNAV-equipped aircraft departing runways 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. *accept* the SSTIK? Are there any known reasons why the SSTIK departures have been declined by the pilots-in-command?
5. What percentage of RNAV-equipped aircraft departing runways 1L/R between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. actually *begin* flying the SSTIK departure and what percentage cross SSTIK waypoint?
6. If RNAV-equipped aircraft depart 1L/1R between 7 a.m. 10 p.m. and begin the SSTIK departure and are later vectored prior to SSTIK, in what general compass direction were they being vectored? What were the altitudes when the vectors were initiated? Who was the initiating party for the vectors (ATC or pilot?) If ATC initiated, what were the reasons for turning the aircraft off the SSTIK? If pilot initiated, what were the reasons that ATC approved the request? What were the approximate aircraft altitudes when crossing from the Bay to the land?
7. What suggestions would you make to reduce aircraft noise in this area?

It is difficult to understand why all RNAV-equipped aircraft (weather and operational concerns excepted) do not seem to be flying the most effective noise abatement departures available and why aircraft are apparently being vectored off of the SERFR RNAV arrival, and why we still have reported significant noise events over the heart of Foster City. I don't presume to tell you how to manage air traffic; your hard-working front line professionals in the SFO tower and Norcal TRACON work day and night to keep our skies safe. I do hope, however, that by digging deeper into the details of aircraft operations at SFO, it will help determine why there does not appear to be an improvement in noise levels.

I value the time of your staff. I expect that to answer these questions will require a great amount of discussion between your staff and mine. In order to minimize your staff time in responding to my questions, I would request that we schedule an in-person working meeting with subject matter experts from your local and regional staff to discuss these questions and others with my District Office staff and other appropriate parties.

I look forward to working with you and your staff.

Very truly yours,



Jackie Speier

KJS:bp/kw

cc: Honorable Anna Eshoo
Honorable Sam Farr