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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-4709

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

October 31, 2019

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I write regarding the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) study on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) measurement, evaluation, and mitigation of aircraft noise in communities surrounding "metroplexes" (areas with complex and multiple-airport air traffic patterns). Specifically, I respectfully request that this assessment be broadened to incorporate Single Site airports in addition to the metroplexes that the GAO is already intending to study.

On June 18, 2019, 29 Members of Congress wrote to request that the GAO study how the FAA has considered community noise impacts while implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) in major metropolitan areas, focusing specifically on metroplexes.

NextGen has also resulted in revised flight procedures at Single Site airports. According to the FAA, the NextGen Single Site initiatives "seek to optimize airspace surrounding smaller cities, replacing legacy procedures or providing new precision procedures for airports where none existed prior." The FAA has completed or is at some point in the study, design, evaluation, or implementation phase on a number of Single Site NextGen projects. Communities surrounding Single Site airports impacted by NextGen procedure changes have expressed significant concern over noise impacts, meriting the inclusion of these Single Sites in the pending study.

I respectfully ask that the following questions—building upon questions asked in the June 2019 letter—be addressed:

Measuring, disclosing, and mitigating noise impacts –

1. How does the FAA consider noise impacts when implementing new routes as part of its NextGen initiative at Single Site airports? Is the FAA consistent in how it considers and reports on noise impacts of NextGen and new flight paths across each Single Site airport?
2. The FAA defines "significant increase in noise" as an increase in the Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) of 1.5 decibels or more over noise sensitive areas at or above the DNL 65-decibels noise exposure level. Do the FAA's criteria for whether changes in noise levels are considered significant sufficiently capture potential negative impacts?

Given negative community response to new routes in areas where the FAA did not find significant impacts would result, should the FAA revise its current metrics or develop alternative metrics to the current DNL standard?

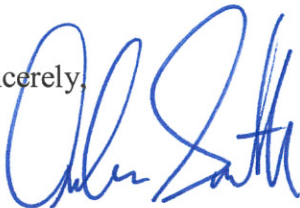
3. Does the FAA measure and disclose noise impacts from changes to flight paths as adequately as it does noise impacts at airports?
4. Has the FAA become more effective at disclosing noise impacts from route changes since it began implementing NextGen? Has the FAA changed how it addresses noise impacts in response to litigation and settlements over flight path changes or requests from Congress?
5. In conducting environmental reviews of proposals for new or modified routes, has the FAA selected historical comparison data that fully and accurately captures flight paths before route changes? Have there been cases where the flight paths actually taken by aircraft changed significantly before the formal implementation of new routes associated with NextGen implementation?
6. Wake RECAT has been implemented at many airports as part of NextGen. This allows arrivals and departures to be more closely spaced in the concentrated performance-based navigation procedures. What has the FAA done to study the effect of Wake RECAT on the populations affected by the increased use of these flight paths?

Public outreach –

1. How does the FAA communicate with the public and solicit and incorporate public input in planning and implementing NextGen at Single-Site airports, including in developing new or modified arrival and departure procedures? Have the FAA's practices been adequate in the view of aviation stakeholders and community members?
2. How is the FAA measuring the adequacy of its public engagement and outreach when planning and implementing NextGen at Single-Site airports?
3. Is the FAA's Instrument Flight Procedures (IFP) Information Gateway data portal sufficiently thorough, accessible, and transparent to communicate changes in flight paths and their potential community impacts with members of the public?

I appreciate your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Adam Smith  
Member of Congress