



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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The Honorable Matthew Beaton, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Attn: Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (“MEPA”) Office
Anne Canaday, EEA No. 3247
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

November 5, 2015

Re: Comments of the Town of Milton on the Boston-Logan International Airport 2014 Environmental Data Report (2014 EDR)

Dear Secretary Beaton,

The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Milton (“Milton”) is pleased to provide the following comments in response to the Boston-Logan International Airport 2014 Environmental Data Report (“2014 EDR”):

1. Background and Impact of Logan Operations in Milton

Milton is a predominantly residential community with a population of 27,000, which is racially diverse (71 % white, 20 % African American). Comprised of only 13.3 square miles, Milton bears the brunt of heavy air traffic arriving and departing Boston-Logan International Airport through three (3) RNAVs (designated as 4R, 27 and 33L), with two more RNAVs proposed by the FAA this year (4L visual and 4L instrument). Because it is mostly comprised of single-family homes with backyards, people often choose to live in Milton to raise their families. Thus, the tremendous amount of aircraft noise imposed on the town severely diminishes the quality and standard of living, as residents report they are unable to enjoy either their homes and properties, or Milton’s recreational areas and open spaces.

Ultimately, Milton seeks fairness and equity in the distribution of airplane operations and the impacts of those operations. We believe that Milton receives a disproportionate impact of airplane operations in the Boston-Logan area. The skies over Milton are already saturated with airplanes, often from very early morning until very late at night. Implementation of two new RNAVs over Milton (4L visual and 4L instrument) will increase the existing inequity. We request that the Secretary work with Massport, Milton and the CAC and establish an effective process to remedy this problem.

The arrival flight path for the heavily used arrival runways 4R/4L (30% 4R, 5% 4L – Table 6-5) were narrowed and concentrated into RNAV routes and the impact on residents has been severe. Additional routing changes to Runway 27 departures were made in March 2013 that also affected areas of Milton. The FAA relied upon a Categorical Exclusion, circumventing full environmental assessment, to implement the runway 27 RNAV in March 2013, which concentrated flight paths over a narrow area, rather than a more equitable distribution. Because this RNAV overflies Milton at low altitudes beginning sometimes before 5:00 A.M., departures from runway 27 cause substantial adverse effects on those under or near it in Milton. The 2014 EDR fails to note that Milton is affected by Runway 27 departures.

The runway 33L departure RNAV was routed over West Milton in June 2013, despite objections from more than 1,000 residents and elected officials. The 2014 EDR fails to note that Milton is affected by Runway 33L departures.

The FAA is relying upon a Categorical Exclusion again, to establish and implement two new 4L RNAVS – 4L instrument and 4L visual. Milton objects to this repeated and incorrect use of the Categorical Exclusions, and has set forth its detailed reasoning in a June 29, 2015 comment letter to the FAA. In sum, the Categorical Exclusion fails to take into account the cumulative impact of three (3), let alone five (5), RNAVS operating over Milton. The ongoing RNAVs implementation is disruptive to and within Milton. As the data set forth below indicates, there has been a 25-fold increase in noise complaints recorded from Milton since 2012. That disruption (and the number of complaints recorded) will only be exacerbated by the implementation of two more RNAVs over Milton. Also, Milton has several schools, which are highly sensitive communities, which are under the concentrated RNAV flight paths and impacted by the ongoing RNAV implementations.

In the last several years, more data has been provided which indicates airplane noise in overflown communities disrupts sleep patterns, which has been shown to result in adverse human health impacts. The noise from airplane overflights can also negatively impacts property values. Fewer buyers are willing to purchase a home in an area with known noise impacts, and prices can be suppressed.

Anecdotal data from Milton residents indicate that the noise from airplanes in Milton is clearly heard above background noise in both commercial and residential areas. Additionally, these noise events disrupt conversations both indoors and outside, and disrupt sleep. As elected officials, we hear frequently from Milton residents who suffer from interrupted sleep, anxiety and a reduced quality of life because of the noise pollution caused by very frequent – and some days continuous – flights over Milton at low altitudes. We cannot overstate the seriousness of the health problems that these RNAVs cumulatively pose for Milton residents, and the adverse cumulative environmental impact that the RNAVs and the low flying planes have on our entire community.

2. Increased Noise Complaints Reported.

Table 6-17 demonstrates that no single community makes as many complaints on the Noise Complaint Line as Milton. According to 2014 EDR, Milton had the highest number of total calls from any town in 2014--2,669 recorded complaints. The second largest was Hull with 1,855 recorded complaints.

Complaints on the Massport complaint line from Milton have increased from an average of 9 per month in 2012, to an average of 160 per month in 2013, to an average of 222 per month in 2014. That represents a *25-fold increase in noise complaints*.¹ Even more troubling, based on data available on the Massport website, but not presented in the 2014 EDR, the noise complaints are not just limited to the summer months, but continue growing in volume in every month of the year as the Boston Logan Airport throughput increases because of routing efficiencies due to the implementation of RNAV procedures. Of the 34 months of complaint data recorded since 2012, the number of complaints recorded in each month except for five (mostly winter) months, has exceeded the total number of complaints recorded in 2012.

Heavily used recreational areas in Milton such as Houghton's Pond, normally enjoyed by thousands of Milton and Boston residents in the summer, and the Ponkapoag Trail in the Blue Hills reservation, have also been severely impacted with the concentration of and alterations in the 4R flight path with many low flying planes now traversing these important regional recreational facilities. These new "highways in the sky" are creating noise levels that prevent enjoyment of these natural settings. According to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Blue Hills is home to 50 prehistoric sites, 15 historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a National Historic Landmark- the Blue Hills Meteorological Observatory. Increased noise is incompatible with these locations and their mission to provide green space and outdoor recreation.

3. Increased Nighttime Operations.

The 2014 EDR acknowledges that nighttime operations at Logan – defined as from 10:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. - have increased significantly. Total use during nighttime hours increased by 5% in 2014 compared to 2013, and has increased by almost 12% since 2010 (Table 6-3).

We request that the Secretary work with Massport and Milton to implement additional late night aircraft restrictions, similar to those set forth in 740 CMR 24.04, which are more protective of Milton and its residents. In particular, it is important to discuss restrictions on RNAV usage and routes that overly residential neighborhoods, including spreading the routes further so that the nighttime noise is less concentrated in residential neighborhoods, or moving routes over the ocean during certain periods of time.

4. Disproportionate Distribution of Aircraft.

The 2014 EDR describes the Preferential Runway Advisory System ("PRAS") as being:

¹ Noise complaints for 2015 have only been tabulated through September, and average 165 monthly. So far, the number of complaints recorded in 2015 has been similar to the number of complaints in January-May of 2014 and have greatly exceeded the number of complaints recorded in January-May of 2013 and 2012.

a set of short-term and long-term runway use goals that include the use of a computer program that recommends to FAA air traffic controllers, runway configurations that will meet weather and demand requirements and provide an **equitable distribution** of Logan Airport's noise impacts on surrounding communities. The two primary objectives of the PRAS goals are to distribute noise on an annual basis, and to provide short-term relief from continuous operations over the same neighborhoods at the ends of the runways.

2014 EDR, page 6-17 (emphasis added).

The report indicates that the system experienced a technical malfunction that was not corrected. Because it was not meeting its goals, presumably because it was not functioning, the Logan Airport CAC voted to abandon the PRAS goals in 2012. However, no other guidelines were put in its place, and Massport still reports runway usage with respect to the PRAS goals (Table 6-6). The PRAS goals offer at least some picture of what a fair distribution of aircraft traffic might look like using one particular tool, i.e. differential runways (being mindful that these PRAS goals were created well before RNAV concentrated flight routes were implemented). Thus, at this stage, only achieving balanced runway usage would not be sufficient to relieve those under the RNAVs although it would be a step in the right direction.

We note that while the PRAS goal for arrivals on runways 4R/4L is 21.1%, the 2014 effective usage is reported at 28.1%. When added to the impacts from the southbound 27 departures (3.4% of all departures) and 33L departures (2.3% of all departures)², Milton is impacted by much of the daily airline traffic moving in and out of Logan, and in a greater proportion than was initially planned or expected, based on the PRAS goals.

5. Mitigation.

The 2014 EDR indicates that "100% of residences exposed to noise levels greater than DNL 65 dB in 2014 are eligible to participate in Massport's residential sound insulation program." 2014 EDR, Figure page 6-3. We submit that this is simply an inadequate standard for participation in Massport mitigation programs. It is clear that the 65 DNL standard is antiquated, inadequate to protect public health, and does not adequately protect sensitive subpopulations. It does not address the acute highs in airport noise impacts actually experienced by residents, but lumps all noise together in 24-hour annual averages. Milton is not alone in this contention. That this measure is inadequate to measure impacts, particularly in metro areas surrounding airports, is a significant issue being raised by communities around the country, including New York City, Washington DC, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.

Even if the DNL standard would be retained, there is consensus developing, supported by WHO data and used on many other countries, that the important regulatory value is 55dB, not 65 dB. Modeled data for Milton indicates that the DNL is 54.5dB in Cunningham Park (the only noise monitor in the Town). Based on this value, Milton should qualify for residential sound

² This Milton overflight information for runways 27 and 33L departures was reported to the Milton CAC representative by Massport staff on 8/5/14 via email.

insulation/mitigation funding. We request the ability to participate in this program for Milton schools, and for all Milton residences. We would appreciate your assistance in working with Massport to make these measures and this funding available within Milton.

6. Air Pollution and Public Health.

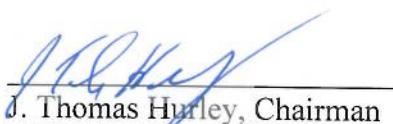
We note that the 2014 EDR only discussed air pollution from airport operations in the context of the actual operations of Logan airport, on Logan property. We believe that this perspective is overly narrow. Recent studies at LAX (Hudda, et al., May 2014) found ultrafine particle counts as far as ten miles from heavily used arrival runways. We request that Massport, in conjunction with the Department of Public Health ("DPH") and the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") conduct noise and air pollution studies in communities like Milton, that receive a substantial number of low-flying arrival aircrafts. This work would be consistent with the East Boston neighborhood study completed by DPH in 2014.³

7. Conclusion and Request for Assistance.

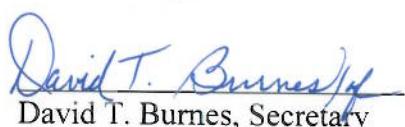
Thank you for your attention to and consideration of our comments on the 2014 EDR. We believe that there can be solutions available to remedy and mitigate the ongoing impact of Logan operations on the residents of Milton. We request that the Secretary work with Massport, Milton, the CAC, and other effected communities to help establish a process to remedy the multiple impacts discussed above. We would appreciate a time to meet with you and your staff to personally discuss the concerns we have outlined here, as well as our suggestions for improvements going forward.

Sincerely,

Board of Selectmen of the Town of Milton



J. Thomas Hurley, Chairman



David T. Burnes, Secretary



Kathleen M. Conlon, Member

³ The report of that study may be found here:
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/environmental/investigations/logan/logan-airport-health-study-final.pdf>

cc: Congressman Stephen F. Lynch
Congressman Michael E. Capuano
U.S. Senator Elizabeth A. Warren
U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey
State Senator Brian A. Joyce
State Representative Walter F. Timilty
State Representative Daniel R. Cullinane
Milton Board of Health
Milton Airplane Noise Advisory Committee
Milton CAC Representative Cindy L. Christiansen
Milton CAC Representative (Alternate) David Godine
Milton Logan Representative Caroline A. Kinsella
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