



## Update on Phoenix Flight Path Changes

Recent flight-path changes made at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport in September 2014 continue to be a matter of serious concern many residents of Phoenix. Substantial work has been done in the U.S. Senate to bring the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to the table to allow for the airport and community to have their voices heard—an opportunity they were not afforded by the FAA prior to the implementation of flight-path changes. It is important that the process surrounding changes to flight paths include the local officials, airport representatives, and residents that know the issues best, both around Sky Harbor and in communities across Arizona.

Below are highlights of recent developments, as well as a summary of past work related to addressing these concerns on behalf of these communities.

### *Most Recent Developments*

**Language to address flight path concerns passes in the Senate:** On April 19, 2016, the U.S. Senate passed the FAA reauthorization bill, which includes language requested by Senators McCain and Flake to address past flight-path changes and improve community participation in future changes.

The legislation also includes an amendment introduced by Senators Flake and McCain that would require the FAA to create an airspace management advisory committee to review and report to Congress on the agency’s process for developing proposals that impact airspace changes.

**FAA confirms willingness to work with Phoenix:** On March 4, 2016, in response to outreach by Sens. McCain and Flake, FAA Administrator Huerta stated, “we remain willing to work together to develop additional potential adjustments to the procedures.”

**Upcoming mediation:** In March, the FAA and city participated in mediation in an attempt to identify ways to resolve flight noise associated with the September 2014 changes. On March 23, 2016, Sens. McCain and Flake sent a letter to FAA Administrator Huerta urging the FAA to “use the tools and authority available to the FAA to reach a workable solution for the community around Sky Harbor and the FAA.”

### *Legislative Efforts and Engagement with the FAA*

- On Dec. 16, 2015, Sens. McCain and Flake introduced **legislation** (S. 2406) that would create a process for the FAA to take steps to mitigate the negative effects of these flight path changes like those in Phoenix, and also ensure that other airports and communities have the opportunity to fully engage with the FAA before any future changes are made.
  - The Senate had previously agreed unanimously to this language in an amendment Sens. McCain and Flake included in the Transportation, Housing and Urban

Development (THUD) Appropriations Bill. However, that larger bill did not advance in the Senate.

- On Jan. 27, 2016, Sens. McCain and Flake sent a letter to Chairman Thune and Chairman Shuster requesting any FAA reauthorization bill include language similar to S.2406.
  - On their request, **this language was included in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill** that passed the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in February.
  - Similarly, this language was **included in the Senate FAA reauthorization bill** which passed the Senate Commerce Committee on March 16, 2016.
- In December 2015, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, which included a provision that **requires the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to “complete and implement a plan which enhances community involvement techniques** and proactively addresses concerns associated with performance-based navigation projects.”
- Sen. McCain wrote to FAA Administrator Huerta on December 22, 2015, providing further details about the purpose of that provision, most notably, that **the Senate record specifies that the FAA should review certain past flight path changes**, and if certain community impacts are demonstrated, to consult with the operator of the airport to **identify measures to mitigate the effect of the procedure** on the human environment; including by considering the use of alternative flight paths.
- Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee **Chairman Thune** wrote a similar letter to the FAA on February 4, 2016.
- Through continued engagement and correspondence with the FAA, **the FAA has committed to expeditiously working on the airport and community outreach plan**, as well as to undertaking efforts to update the Administration’s community outreach manual.
- Assurances have been provided that the community involvement plan will include procedures that ensure, for projects involving flight path changes, that appropriate outreach to the community and airport leadership occurs early enough in the project’s timeline **to allow for these communities to participate meaningfully in such processes**.
- On February 25, 2016, building on past legislative efforts, Sens. McCain and Flake introduced the *Airspace Management Advisory Committee Act* (S. 2585), legislation that would require the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) **to create an airspace management advisory committee** to review and provide input on future significant airspace changes.

### *Phoenix Metroplex Developments*

- **The FAA suspended further flight path-changes associated with Phoenix Metroplex**, which is a broader redesign of the airspace in Phoenix, as of December 11, 2015. The FAA intends to resume that process in one year, a timeline that guarantees that the Phoenix Metroplex process will follow the requirements established in the airport and community outreach plan that are currently being developed.

- The FAA has committed to **ensuring opportunities for public engagement at workshops throughout areas that will be impacted by the Phoenix Metroplex project**, as well as undertaking a full public notice and comment process for this project.