

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration**

[Docket No. 28241]

Final Environmental Impact Statement; Effects of Changes in Aircraft Flight Patterns Over the State of New Jersey

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Invitation to Comment.

SUMMARY: On July 28, 1995, the FAA issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) required under Section 9119 of the Aviation Safety and Capacity Expansion Act of 1990 (ASCEA), Public Law 101-508. That section directed the FAA to prepare an EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the effects of changes in aircraft flight patterns over the State of New Jersey as a result of the implementation of the Expanded East Coast Plan (EECP).

The proposed Federal action is to continue the current routes and procedures that were implemented as part of the EECP in 1987 and 1988, and modified to 1991. FAA has identified the continuation of current routes and procedures, as modified to incorporate a mitigation measure identified as the Solberg Mitigation Proposal, as both the preferred alternative and the environmentally preferable alternative. The Solberg Mitigation Proposal reduces aircraft noise in the Scotch Plains, and Fanwood areas of Union County, New Jersey. This is one of the five areas that experienced increased noise as a result of the implementation of the EECP.

The FAA prepared the FEIS based upon the findings in the post-scoping document issued in June 1991, the Draft EIS (DEIS) issued in November 1992, and the Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS) issued in September 1994.

The SDEIS contained the analysis of the Solberg Mitigation Proposal, the agency's analysis of the New Jersey Coalition Against Aircraft Noise (NJCAAN) Ocean Routing Proposal, responses to comments on the DEIS, Appendix F, and other new information. In response to the large number of comments concerning noise impacts over particular communities, the FAA included Appendix F, which provides the changes in noise levels predicted for each census block in New Jersey with each alternative, the mitigation proposal, and the NJCAAN ocean routing proposal.

The FAA also carefully considered testimony from over 480 Federal, state,

and local elected and appointed officials and citizens and from the 2800 written comments received at more than 30 public hearings and meetings during the 515-day comment period.

After issuance of the Record of Decision and reporting to Congress pursuant to Section 9119 of ASCEA concerning this EIS process, the FAA intends to continue working with affected communities to identify and develop new strategies to mitigate aircraft noise as part of a "follow-on" study. That study will be a follow-on study insofar as it will address aeronautical and aircraft noise issues. It will be a planning study independent of the statutory EIS requirement.

The following is a summary of key portions contained in the FEIS and is not intended to duplicate or cover every aspect of the FEIS.

Alternatives

The FAA conducted an extensive scoping process to identify a reasonable range of alternatives for study in the EIS. The scoping process indicated that citizen concerns focused on arrivals and departures at the three major airports in the New York metropolitan area.

In the FEIS, the FAA analyzed the following alternatives based on citizen input and independent evaluation:

- Alternative A. Maintain the current (as defined in 1991) EECP structure (Proposed Action and No Action).
- Alternative B. Return to 1986 air traffic routes and procedures using 1991 traffic (Rollback).
- Alternative C2. Route Newark south flow departure traffic over Raritan Bay to the ocean at night only (Oceanic/military routing (nighttime only) for Newark departures).
- Alternative D3. Spread aircraft departing Newark runways 22L and 22R to three different headings (Spreading or fanning).

Environmental Consequences

Twenty-one environmental categories were analyzed for environmental consequences. The impact categories of chief concern were noise, air, and water quality. Analysis revealed that none of the alternatives, except Return to 1986 Routes and Procedures, would cause significant impacts.

The following is a brief description of the noise impacts associated with the alternatives and the Solberg Mitigation Proposal contained in the FEIS. Other Environmental Consequences are summarized in more detail in Section 1.7, Chapter 1 of the FEIS.

1. Alternative B, Return to 1986 Routes and Procedures

Noise analysis indicates that, in comparison to implementation of the EECP, return to 1986 routes and procedures with 1991 traffic would increase noise by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB for 1.45 million people. Approximately 45,622 individuals would experience a reduction in noise by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB. It would also increase noise by 1.5 dB within the 65 DNL contour in one small area of Holgate, New Jersey. The latter impact on Holgate appears to result solely from the assumptions used to reconstruct and model this alternative.

2. Alternatives C2 and D3, Nighttime Use of Ocean Routing and Spreading

Nighttime Use of Ocean Routing and Spreading would provide marginal noise relief. Nighttime Ocean Routing would increase noise by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB for about 4,349 people and would not decrease noise by a similar amount, while the Spreading alternative would neither increase nor decrease noise impacts by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB. Both the Nighttime Ocean Routing and Spreading alternatives have potential impacts outside of New Jersey.

3. Solberg Mitigation Proposal

The Solberg Mitigation Proposal described below under the section "Mitigation" would reduce noise by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB for approximately 18,755 residents of the Scotch Plains and Fanwood areas of Union County. This is one of the five areas that experienced noise increases of DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB as a result of implementing the EECP. No increases by DNL 5 dB or greater above DNL 45 dB would occur in the study area. The Solberg Mitigation Proposal would allow for unrestricted climb by Newark westbound departures and would only shift, not lower, potentially conflicting arrivals to LaGuardia, 10 miles to the south.

Mitigation Measures

Opportunities for mitigation were explored although the levels of noise increase and exposure resulting from implementation of the EECP and its alternatives, with the exception of one area affected by Alternative B, are well below the established thresholds at which FAA considers compatible for residential land uses. The Solberg mitigation measure would realign westbound departure routes from Newark International Airport to the Solberg navigational aid in Readington,

New Jersey. It would reduce the noise impacts in the Scotch Plains and Fanwood areas of Union County, areas that experienced increased noise as a result of implementation of the EECF.

The Solberg mitigation measure and mitigation measures considered, but not retained for detailed study, are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of the FEIS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. William J. Marx, Program Manager, ATM-700, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20591.

Any person may obtain a copy of the executive summary of the FEIS or the entire FEIS by submitting a request to the FAA contact identified above.

Copies of the comments on the DEIS and SDEIS are available for review in the FAA Docket, Numbers 26987 and 27649, also at the above address. Appendix A of the FEIS contains responses to public comments.

The FEIS will also be available for review at the following public libraries:

Teaneck Public Library, 840 Teaneck Road, Teaneck, NJ 07868
 Newark Public Library, 5 Washington Street, P.O. Box 630, Newark, NJ 07101-0830
 Parsippany-Troy Hills Free Public Library, P.O. Box 5303, Parsippany, NJ 07054
 Piscataway Township Free Public Library, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, 500 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854
 Cherry Hill Free Public Library, 100 Kings Highway North, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
 Jersey City Public Library, 472 Jersey Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07302-3499, Attn: Directors Office
 Staten Island, New York Public Library, St. George Library Center, 5 Central Place, Staten Island, NY 10301

Camden Free Public Library, 616 Broadway, Camden, NJ 08103
 Vineland Free Public Library, 1058 E. Landis Ave., Vineland, NJ 08360
 Middletown Township Public Library, 55 New Monmouth Road, Middletown, NJ 07748
 Free Public Library of the City of Trenton, 120 Academy Street, Trenton, NJ 08607-2448
 Ridgewood Public Library, 125 North Maple Ave., Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3288
 Free Public Library of Woodbridge, George Frederick Plaza, Woodbridge, NJ 07195, Attn: Reference Desk
 Elizabeth Public Library, 11 S. Broad Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07201
 Paterson Free Public Library, Danforth Memorial Library, 250 Broadway, Paterson, NJ 07501
 Cranford Public Library, 224 Walnut Ave., Cranford, NJ 07016
 Rochelle Park Public Library, 405 Rochelle Ave., Rochelle Park, NJ 07882
 Runnemede Public Library, Broadway & Black Horse Pike, P.O. Box 119, Runnemede, NJ 08078
 Tinton Falls Public Library, 684 Tinton Ave., Tinton Falls, NJ 07724
 New Jersey State Library, Department of Education, 185 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ 08825-0520
 Joint Free Public Library of Morristown and Morris Township, 1 Miller Road, Morristown, NJ 07960
 Cape May County Library, Mechanic Street, Cape May Courthouse, NJ 08210
 Ocean County Library, 101 Washington Street, Toms River, NJ 08753
 Hunterdon County Library, Route 12, Flemington, NJ 08822
 Sussex County Library, RD-3, Box 170, Route 655, Homestead Road, Newton, NJ 07860
 Warren County Library, Court House Annex, Bevedre, NJ 07823, Attn: Reference Day Dept.

Atlantic city Library, 1 North Tennessee Ave., Atlantic City, NJ 08401
 Gloucester County Library, 200 Holly Dell Drive, Sewell, NJ 08080
 Somerset County Library, P.O. Box 6700, Bridgewater, NJ 08807
 Salem Library, Broadway, Salem, NJ 08079
 Burlington County Library, 1257 Westwoodlane Road, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060

Comment Period: Although the Council on Environmental Quality regulations do not provide for a formal comment period after issuance of a FEIS, due to the technical complexity of issues raised and to maximize public participation FAA is soliciting comments on the FEIS for a period of 45 days. These comments will be considered by the decision maker in determining FAA's course of action and issuing the Record of Decision. The opportunity to comment will extend from July 28, until September 11, 1995.

Written comments on the FEIS should be received at the following address, in triplicate, by September 11, 1995: Headquarters Federal Aviation Administration, Office of the Chief Counsel, Attn: Rules Docket (AGC-10), Docket No. 28241, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591. Comments may be delivered or inspected at Room 915G in FAA headquarters between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. Late-filed comments will be considered to the extent practicable.

Issued in Washington, DC on July 28, 1995.

James H. Washington,

Deputy Director of Air Traffic.

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