

Howard County Council

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Howard County Files Comments Showing Maryland Aviation Administration's Draft Environmental Assessment on BWI Expansion is Legally Insufficient

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Howard County Government is questioning a Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) of Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport recently prepared by the Maryland Aviation Administration for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), because of deficiencies in data used for the Draft EA.

The County has been engaged with the MAA and FAA for nearly three years regarding the implementation of NextGen, a satellite-based air traffic control system that has resulted in increased noise and negative impacts on County residents. In comments submitted to the MAA on March 9, the County discredits the Draft EA, noting the lack of information related to massive changes in State and federal noise control programs.

"Residents have been and continue to be negatively impacted by increased noise from changes to flight patterns, which are a direct result of NextGen. The data used in this Environmental Assessment is out-of-date and doesn't reflect current conditions. We see this as a significant quality of life issue, so our Administration will keep fighting until we obtain a resolution that is acceptable for our community," said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman.

According to comments submitted by the County to the MAA: "The Draft EA is legally insufficient in several respects...and is based on non-representative and outdated noise data that MAA has acknowledged does not reflect actual conditions...Because the FAA unilaterally abandoned the Noise Compatibility Planning process, which is not addressed in the Draft EA, all of the assumptions about harmful impacts due to noise are false."

"This Environmental report on BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport totally fails to recognize the significant harmful impacts that aircraft noise has had on Howard County citizens, as a result of FAA's implementation of NextGen," said Council Chairperson Mary Kay Sigaty. "MAA's assessment is based on inaccurate information and the Council will push for the MAA to perform a full Environmental Impact Study."

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The County's comments also note that, "the vast majority of noise data underlying the Draft EA is from before 2015. The flight procedure changes, including those that began to be flown in 2016, have resulted in highly controversial noise impacts."

In April 2015, BWI-Thurgood Marshall Airport launched NextGen. Since then, planes have been taking off over more densely populated areas and turning at lower altitudes, resulting in a significant increase in aircraft noise in Elkridge, Ellicott City, Hanover, Columbia, and other parts of Howard County. Flight paths have also been extremely consolidated resulting in unacceptable impacts to Howard County citizens.

On February 6, 2017, the County Council passed Council Bill 8-2017, which authorized the Howard County Office of Law to institute legal proceedings related to the implementation of the NextGen system. With pressure from the County and the community, the FAA formed the BWI Community Roundtable Working Group, which began last year and includes representatives from the County Council, County Executive's office and community members who are impacted by air traffic noise from BWI-Thurgood Marshall Airport.

As detailed in the County's comments, MAA has clearly stated that BWI-Thurgood Marshall did not have a noise problem before the Metroplex flight procedural changes, but did afterwards. The MAA briefed the June 20, 2017 Community Roundtable that they received over 1,000 noise complaints in the first 20 days of June 2017.

The County Executive and the County Council remain optimistic in finding a resolution to this matter and continue to work with the Office of Law on future legal options.

To read Howard County's comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment, [click here](#).

To read MAA's Draft Environmental Assessment, [click here](#).

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