


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 5, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: DCA AIRCRAFT NOISE REDUCTION UPDATE

The purpose of this memo is to update City Council regarding National Airport (DCA) aircraft noise activity in regard to a recent positive action by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in regard to the noise impact on Alexandria.

In April 2019, staff and residents observed that the use of early turns for south flow departing aircraft from National Airport was increasing, causing increased aircraft noise to residents. In response to the recent activity, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) DCA Aircraft Noise Community Working Group, through Alexandria representative, Steve Thayer, raised the matter of increased noise levels in subsequent Working Group meetings. FAA management agreed to review the matter with the DCA controllers and reiterate the previous advisory.

On July 3, 2019, the FAA issued a published advisory specifically requiring air traffic controllers at DCA to minimize early turns of westbound departing aircraft in the south flow direction. The advisory is effective the date of the notice. In late 2016, through the City's participation on the MWAA DCA Aircraft Noise Community Working Group, Alexandria secured an agreement from the FAA that states DCA controllers would limit the use of early turns over Alexandria, to those situations where weather, national security or safety required such use. The FAA issued a verbal advisory to the controllers in December 2016, and its impact to Alexandria residents was noticeably positive.

In south flow, westbound aircraft departing from DCA are required by published FAA flight procedures to turn west no sooner than beyond the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, at which point aircraft is at higher elevations than it is prior to the bridge way point. When the aircraft turns at the waypoint, it is at higher altitudes than it would be, if it were turning before this waypoint, thus the area directly below the aircraft experiences a lower sound level. While the published FAA flight procedure keeps aircraft over the Potomac River until the Wilson Bridge waypoint, controllers do have discretion to allow aircraft to make early turns. Ongoing monitoring will need to be undertaken to ensure that the new FAA flight procedures are followed.

For further information about the City's participation in the MWAA/DCA Aircraft Noise Community Working Group please contact or Lisa Goldberg at lisa.goldberg@alexandriava.gov or at 703.746.4181. You may also visit www.alexandriava.gov/noise for additional information.

cc:

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