

Fair Skies Coalition Status

Brief background

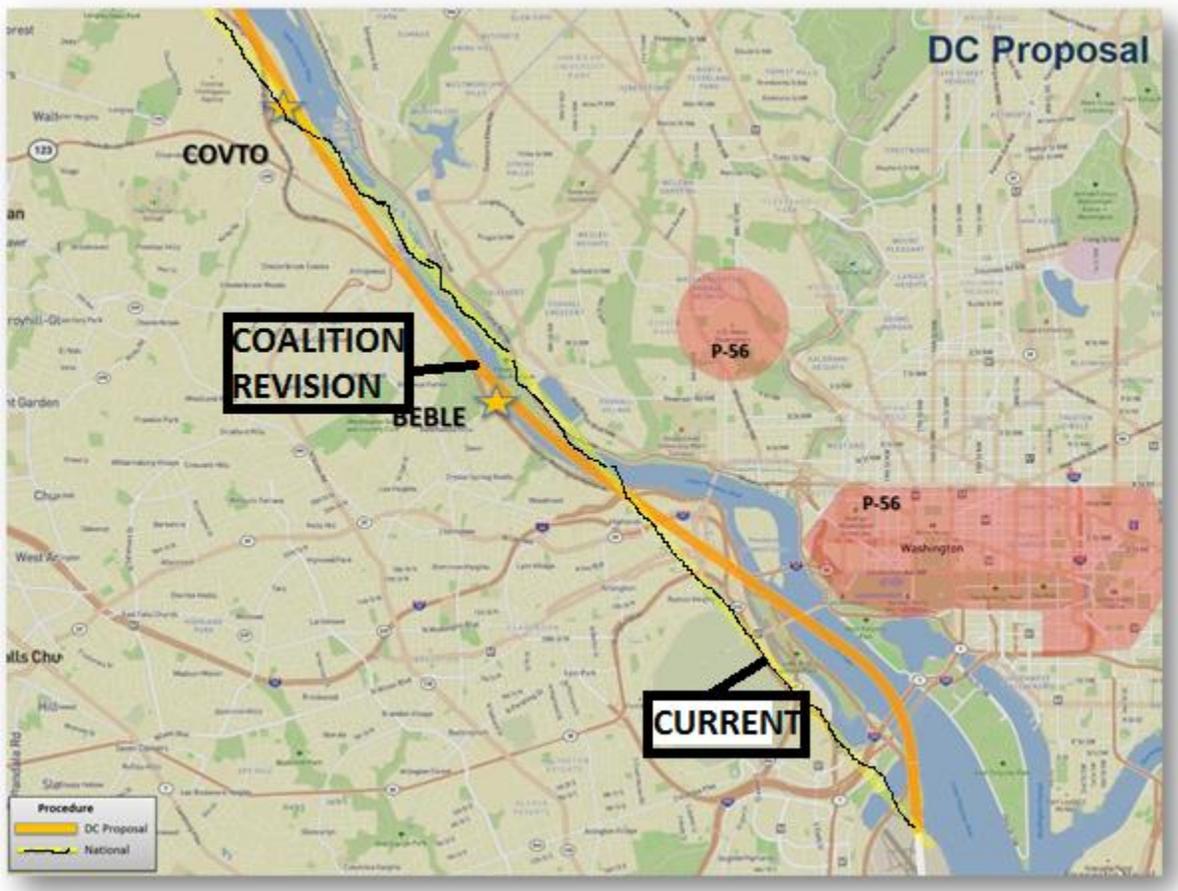
Since the Spring of 2015 the quality of life for residents of DC communities along the Potomac River has been significantly reduced by a dramatic increase in aircraft noise. This increase in noise pollution was caused by the FAA's Metroplex Next Generation (NextGen) program that shifted the northern flight path for departures from Reagan Washington National Airport from Virginia towards DC. This flight path change was implemented by the FAA without any notice to our communities and without the required environmental review. Not only has this increase in aircraft noise interrupted sleep and outdoor activities of residents, it has also reduced the value of the houses within the new flight path. Several affected residents have undertaken successful appeals to reduce their property tax assessments.

Civic associations representing Georgetown, Burleith, Foggy Bottom, Foxhall, Colony Hill, Palisades joined by Georgetown University formed the [DC Fair Skies Coalition](#) to fight this illegal action and filed an appeal with the Federal Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit challenging the drastic change in the flight paths as unlawful. On May 27, 2016, the Coalition filed an Administrative Petition with the U.S. Court of Appeals demanding that the FAA take immediate action to abate the currently unlawful and unacceptable levels of aircraft noise that are being inflicted upon DC communities on the East side of the Potomac River. The Petition detailed the history of the current LAZIR flight path, part of the FAA's NextGen aircraft route project, which involved moving the historic NATIONAL 328 departure flight path from Ronald Reagan National Airport approximately one-half mile east and impacting residents from Foggy Bottom to Palisades with increased aircraft noise and pollution. The Petition was signed by the Mayor, DC Council Members for Wards 2 and 3, and all At Large Council Members. The DC Court of Appeals ordered the FAA and the Coalition to enter arbitration.

Current State

Prior to the flight path changes enacted by the FAA in Spring 2015, the historic northern departure flight path, NATIONAL 328, took planes on a straight line flight path over the Pentagon, Arlington National Cemetery, and commercial Arlington before intersecting the river above the Georgetown Reservoir. Today planes are mostly flying using advanced GPS technology called area navigation known as RNAV. In arbitration, the FAA proposed a shift from LAZIR to LAZIR B for flights departing from National. According to the FAA's own noise analysis of LAZIR B, dated Dec 10, 2015, it would decrease average noise levels from departing flights slightly in Georgetown but INCREASE average noise levels for upriver residential areas, such as the Palisades. This past summer, the FAA hosted a series of Community Working Group meetings to provide citizens with an opportunity to review and comment on the LAZIR B changes. The Coalition wrote a letter expressing its serious concerns about LAZIR B to the FAA's Eastern Region Administrator and Vice President, Mission Support Services. At this point, arbitration has stopped and the Coalition believes that its only recourse is to file a lawsuit that would force relief from the FAA. The primary objective of the lawsuit is to require the FAA to do a full "environmental assessment" before making any flight path changes and, in the case of the most recent change, requiring the FAA to return to the former (Coalition Proposed National 328) flight path while it undertakes the necessary assessment. Since the

National 328 flight path passed through what is now waypoint COVTO an important revision to LAZIR B was to insist that COVTO remain where it is currently located. The flight path Ward 2 and 3 proposed during arbitration is the RNAV equivalent of the National 328. As you can see from the graphical comparison of the current and proposed routing, the “Coalition Proposed” routing would reduce noise. The Coalition’s position is that any flight path change, including the one it proposes, should be the subject of a proper environmental assessment where among other things issues like the actual noise levels on the ground and the nighttime noise problem can be raised, remains. That is also the objective of the litigation which calls for the FAA to revert to the National 328 as interim relief.



In support of the Coalition’s fight, the Mayor and the DC Council have budgeted \$300,000 to hire experts to conduct an aircraft noise study to be submitted to the FAA as part of a Court ordered environmental review. In order to properly employ the funds for the noise study that the D.C. Government has authorized, however, the Coalition must first win this upcoming lawsuit. As previous status reports noted, volunteer attorneys have spent many months researching and drafting an opening brief and it needs to be filed in January. This lawsuit is the only way for Ward 2 and 3 residents to fight the FAA and abate current noise levels.

Ed Solomon, chair of the Fair Skies Coalition, and Marcio Duffles, the Ward 3 Community Working Group advisor to the Washington Metropolitan Airport Authority, are invited speakers to the March 7 PCA meeting. They can answer all your questions pertaining to the lawsuit and

feasible changes to flight paths that could reduce the level of aircraft noise suffered by Palisades residents. Please plan to attend.

Residents should continue to use the FAA's web application (<http://webtrak5.bksv.com/dca>) to identify aircraft causing excessive noise and file complaints with the FAA. These complaints matter! Further background information detailing the Coalition's position and petition, as well as better graphics regarding current and alternative proposals can be found on the Palisade's website.

