



Howard County Council

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County officials meet with FAA to advance residents' concerns about BWI-Marshall Airport noise

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – A contingent of Howard County officials, led by Chief Administrative Officer Lonnie R. Robbins, Council Chair Dr. Calvin Ball, and Council Vice-Chair Jon Weinstein today met with officials of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Washington, D.C. to discuss significant complaints and concerns regarding an increase in airplane noise for residents who live near BWI-Marshall Airport. Ball and Weinstein represent the areas most affected by this issue.

"It's clear to County Executive Allan Kittleman that something around the airport has changed and we believe the NextGEN system is the source of the problem," said Robbins. "We requested this meeting to work together to find some way to alleviate the unacceptable noise levels that are disrupting these communities and to restore the quality of life for these residents."

At today's meeting, the County pressed federal representatives to take steps to implement a near-term improvement to alleviate the problem, while pursuing a formal process for a permanent solution. FAA officials pledged to work with local elected officials, community organizations, and the Maryland Aviation Administration, to establish a collaborative working group with the ultimate goal of addressing the negative impact from NextGEN.

NextGEN is satellite technology used for air traffic control, designed to cut down on flight times, reduce fuel consumption, reduce emissions and pollution and deliver savings to the airline industry. The system was launched at BWI-Marshall in November 2014. Since then, planes have been taking off in more concentrated areas and turning at lower altitudes, increasing the noise in Elkrige, Hanover, and parts of Columbia.

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Numbers released by BWI-Marshall show the airport received 835 noise complaints in 2014. In 2015, that number jumped to 1,849, an increase of 121 percent. In addition to BWI-Marshall, increased noise complaints resulting from implementing NextGEN technology have been reported near airports in Boston, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Phoenix, and New York.

“Our Howard County residents have been vocal that their quality of life has been negatively impacted following the implementation of NextGEN,” said Dr. Ball. “They have been patient long enough but deserve results. I am concerned with the FAA’s response to date but following this meeting I’m hopeful they have heard our pleas for a return to the original flight plan while a true study can be conducted.”

“I have been working on this issue for well over one year, and I have been determined to get answers for my constituents. Unsatisfied by the answers so far, I have pushed for this face-to-face meeting to engage the FAA directly,” said Weinstein. “At first we were led to believe that the noise was due to runway construction. There has been no relief since that work concluded and the significant increase in noise has hurt my constituents’ health, welfare, and property values.”

Today’s meeting, with Brian Langdon, of the FAA’s Office of Government and Industry Affairs, also included representatives from the offices of Senator Ben Cardin, Congressmen Elijah Cummings, John Sarbanes, and Dutch Ruppersberger, and Maryland Delegates Eric Ebersole and Clarence Lam.

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