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February 6, 2008

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Stevens  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Stevens:

As the Commerce Committee prepares to hold a hearing on the nomination of Robert A. Sturgell to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I respectfully request your consideration of the attached questions regarding the Integrated Airspace Alternative (IAA).

As you know, the IAA is being developed as a way to reduce airspace congestion over greater New York and Philadelphia. While I acknowledge the need to redesign this airspace to reduce delays, increase efficiency, and improve safety, I am concerned that this specific plan is being designed and implemented in an unacceptably opaque manner.

In two letters I sent last year to former Acting Administrator, Marion C. Blakey, I expressed my concerns and the concerns of my constituents regarding proposed arrival and departure routes over southwestern Connecticut. Through public meetings and correspondence, the FAA consistently failed to provide adequate answers to basic questions about the number, altitude, frequency, and noise of projected flights on these routes. As such, my constituents were deprived of being able to offer informed public opinion on the IAA before it moved forward. Late last year, State Attorney General, Richard Blumenthal, and over one dozen Connecticut municipalities were forced to take legal action against the FAA over its failure to address a range of IAA-related issues that will affect the quality of life in Connecticut.

The attached questions were drafted by my constituents and have my support. Given the expected importance of airspace redesign in the next administrator's tenure, it is my hope that these questions will be raised to Mr. Sturgell.

I thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER J. DODD  
United States Senator

## Question for the Sturgell Nomination Hearing

1. The FAA has touted its integrated airspace alternative for the NY, NJ and Philadelphia Airspace Redesign primarily for reasons of efficiency and has explained that the redesign is a fundamental shift in air traffic design and management from the practices of the past. Yet, this major change will be taking place over one of the most densely populated areas of the country and the safety of the flying public and people on the ground must be paramount. Especially in light of recent disturbing reports of increases in operational errors and runway incursions, please explain, in detail:

a) How will there be no denigration in safety when, under this plan, aircraft will be spaced far more closely than has been the case in the past, with less margin for error?

b) What assumptions are being made regarding aircraft equipment, pilot training, and air traffic controller training for each phase of this plan if there is to be absolutely no denigration in safety?

2. The FAA has described the airspace redesign as one of the main tools for reducing the problems of airline delays in the northeast and nationwide. Could you describe the methodology the FAA used to reach that conclusion, the estimated amount of time saved per flight if the redesign is implemented, and what alternative methods for addressing airline delays FAA considered and rejected?

3. A number of communities in New Jersey and other states in the affected region have raised concerns about increases in aircraft noise and other environmental impacts that could result from this airspace redesign. What methodology did the FAA use to evaluate these environmental impacts? Could you describe the noise mitigation strategies the FAA intends to employ in affected communities? Did the FAA's analysis take into account the increase in noise likely to result from dramatically increased air traffic over the next 10 years?

4. The NEPA process requires the FAA to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) disclosing the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project. However, the EIS for the airspace redesign failed to disclose the impacts associated with a significant and self-evident consequence of that project -- namely, that reduced delays at affected airports would lead to increases in the number of operations at those airports. Why, despite the FAA's own projections of reduced delays achieved by the airspace redesign, was the public not given an accurate picture of the increased flight operations -- and the associated noise and other adverse environmental impacts -- that would surely follow?