

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 1, 2020

Raquel Girvin  
Western-Pacific Regional Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration Western-Pacific Region  
777 S. Aviation Blvd., Suite 150  
El Segundo, CA 90245

Via email: [Raquel.Girvin@faa.gov](mailto:Raquel.Girvin@faa.gov)

Dear Regional Administrator Girvin:

As you are well aware, the coronavirus pandemic challenging the world right now has also dramatically reduced the volume of aircraft operations across the country. This has meant a lessening of some of the noise problems experienced by those experiencing concentrated noise effects from living under the narrowed flight paths created by implementation of the SoCal Metroplex project. Unfortunately, however, some problems do persist, including that of low-altitude flights. Constituents from across the region continue to contact our offices asking why flights are coming in so low over their heads.

COVID-19 is the most significant disruption in the history of commercial aviation. The pandemic has reduced daily passenger numbers to levels not seen since the 1950s. The number of aircraft operations has also plummeted drastically.

In discussions between FAA and staff from our offices the over the past four years, and in discussions with the LAX Community Noise Roundtable (Roundtable), among others, the public has proposed various potential remedies to reduce airplane noise. As one example of those proposals, the Roundtable has requested that Southern California air traffic control (TRACON) direct aircraft to adhere more closely to published altitudes when approaching LAX using the North Downwind Procedure. This would reduce the number of flights coming in at noisier, lower altitudes. The FAA has repeatedly pointed to the complexity of air traffic, weather, and the sheer volume of flights as excuses for significant downward deviation from the altitudes specified in the flight procedures. The FAA has stated on multiple occasions that the volume of aircraft landing at the world's third busiest airport means that merging flight paths prior to final approach and landing often means directing planes to fly lower, often thousands of feet lower, than the altitudes called for by FAA's own procedures.

The Roundtable's Metroplex Ad Hoc Committee has regularly presented data on altitudes of actual operations reaching back to the beginning of SoCal Metroplex implementation. Those data reflect that, on average, between 35 and 45 percent of the aircraft flying the North Downwind

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approach come in below 5,700 feet at the DAHJR waypoint, which calls for aircraft to fly at 6,000 feet. Pre-COVID, on average roughly 8,000 operations per month would fly over the DAHJR waypoint. Since the pandemic shutdowns began in March and April, that number has been reduced by approximately two-thirds. During that same period, however, despite a dramatically reduced volume of flights, the percentage of aircraft flying low over DAHJR has remained nearly identical: 46% of flights below 5,700 feet in April, 41% in May, 41% in June. When asked about this at the July 8, 2020 Roundtable meeting, FAA representatives declined to respond citing litigation between the City of Los Angeles and the FAA as the reason they could not speak to this issue.

As Members of Congress representing constituents severely affected by noise from Metroplex, we insist on receiving an answer to this question: Why has the drastic reduction in flights failed to result in a change in the percentage of flights below the published altitude? In specific, as an example, why has FAA not been able to ensure that aircraft flying over the North Downwind Arrival waypoints of DAHJR and GADDO are flying the 6,000 foot height guidance, even when air traffic has been reduced by more than two-thirds?

We look forward to a speedy response.


Sincerely,



Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

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