



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20591

August 3, 2017

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor of Maryland  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

Thank you for your May 11 letter supporting the DC Metroplex BWI Community Roundtable's resolution adopted at its first meeting in March. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is pleased to collaborate with the Maryland Aviation Administration's newly formed Roundtable for the airport authority, communities, and industry to address the concerns of the communities around Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI).

The Performance Based Navigation (PBN) procedures adopted as part of the Metroplex Project make flight-routes safer and more predictable. As aircraft avionics equipment improves, the FAA is replacing conventional legacy flight-route procedures to take advantage of satellite-based navigation technology. This technology guides air traffic more precisely and efficiently, and the PBN procedures in question were adopted to support it.

Over the years, Congress has expressly directed the FAA to implement PBN procedures throughout the National Airspace System (NAS). The most recently enacted long-term authorization adopted in 2012 directed the FAA to accelerate deployment of these advanced procedures in several provisions of Title II, Next Gen Air Transportation System and Air Traffic Control Modernization in the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, H.R. 658, P.L. 112-95.

As we execute the directives from Congress, it remains a high priority for us to ensure that we meaningfully engage with communities, airports, and all stakeholders of the NAS as changes to individual procedures or larger air space redesign occur in a given area. The FAA has been active in more robust community involvement since implementing the Metroplex. In our outreach, we find that participating communities believe our methodology for calculating noise is unfair. Due to their input, we are conducting research and updating tools with the latest methodologies to ensure use of the most accurate noise modeling possible. Regarding aircraft altitude, often our data doesn't correlate with community perception. However, we do see less dispersion of aircraft on radar tracks. As a result, we are currently exploring ways to safely and effectively add dispersion in our procedures. A project to address this issue will begin in late August 2017.

We appreciate the creation of the Roundtable as we find it's a valuable way to work with local communities to come up with solutions that meet the needs of the entire community. The modification of the TERPZ procedure is a good example of this. After public concern and our post implementation review, we changed the procedure so that aircraft would climb to a higher altitude before turning. Analysis of this change indicates aircraft are now flying similar tracks to the pre-Metroplex condition. Still, as we have explained to the Roundtable members at several meetings that the FAA has attended, reverting to the flight paths and procedures that existed prior to the implementation of the DC Metroplex project is not possible.

The procedures designed and implemented for the DC Metroplex were either new or amended. The original procedures, flight paths, and altitudes are no longer published on navigational charts or loaded onto aircraft navigation computers. These procedures are also no longer maintained in our procedures inventory. Additionally, the network of departure and arrival procedures and overflights that were implemented at BWI has dependencies with the procedures and flows to other airports such as Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport.

While we have given the DC Metroplex project work high priority, the process to examine its PBN procedures is expected to take approximately 18 months. Although some elements may be able to be completed within a year, it could take up to 24 months from development to publication and use. In the interim, we are also looking at what, if any, shorter term efforts are possible. As an example, there was much discussion with the Roundtable about the altitude of aircraft arriving at the airport, particularly as aircraft get closer to the airport. This was an important conversation to the FAA because the DC Metroplex process did not change these instrument arrival procedures, and the altitudes in the procedures are the same, yet communities indicate aircraft are flying lower. We will continue to give full consideration to the Roundtable's recommendations.

I look forward to meeting with you the next time you are in Washington, DC.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me or Chris Brown, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael P. Huerta', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Michael P. Huerta  
Administrator