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FAA

News-Times Staff

Published: 01:00 a.m., Sunday, June 29, 2008

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The skies over western Connecticut will be noisier if the Federal Aviation Administration implements its plan to reroute airplanes.

The FAA's goal is to reduce flight delays at New York metropolitan area airports by reducing congestion in the air.

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To do that, planes will be rerouted over Fairfield County and fly at lower levels, increasing noise levels.

Fairfield County enjoys the benefit of easy access to these airports, so it's important to acknowledge that noise comes with airports.

The problem, however, is the FAA refuses to consider alternatives to its plan.



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As elected officials in this region have sought the FAA's attention, they have been rebuffed.

"I have never dealt in my entire life in Congress with a more arrogant agency," said U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, the Bridgeport Republican who represents the 4th Congressional District, which includes Ridgefield, Redding and most of Fairfield County.

Local officials have formed the Alliance for Sensible Airspace Planning to work together to get a more sensible, more responsive plan from the FAA. Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi is chairman of the alliance.



Federal magistrate denies request to delay depositions in Danbury 11 case

The group had hoped the FAA would be willing to listen to local concerns. But the FAA insists its congestion plan has been sufficiently discussed, although that was done before most residents of Fairfield County knew what the FAA was up to.

An "arrogant agency" sounds about right when describing federal regulators not willing to listen to local concerns.

Local officials and residents are not suggesting that Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark airports be shut down.

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Prescott Bush Jr. dies

But they are questioning the FAA's failure to consider alternative strategies -- such as encouraging airlines to move more flights to off-peak hours or imposing quotas for high-peak flight times.

Communities in Pennsylvania and New York's Westchester County are targeted as well by the FAA plan for more and lower-flying planes.

One fallout of the FAA plan is that Danbury Municipal Airport will require local aircraft to fly even lower than they do now, to make way for the larger planes headed for New York. This also will increase noise levels.

Shays has asked the Government Accountability Office, a nonpartisan agency that works for Congress, to study alternatives to the FAA plan. Its report is expected to be issued in August.

Perhaps a GAO study will help get the FAA's attention.

If not, Congress should insist that the FAA pay attention. Opponents of the FAA plan are asking good questions that deserve answers.



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