

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair
House Committee on Transportation
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

As Congress begins consideration of a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill this year, we write to strongly oppose any changes to the current High Density (“Slot”) and Perimeter rules at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (“National”).

National and Washington Dulles International Airport (“Dulles”) operate as an integrated system of federally owned assets. National was never intended to be a long-haul airport. The dual airport system was crafted with this in mind to accommodate limited land and runways at National. Dulles occupies 11,830 acres while National is just 860 acres. Acknowledging the physical limitations and community impacts of aircraft noise at National, Congress mandated the Slot and Perimeter rules.


National is currently designed to accommodate 15 million passengers annually. Last year, the airport set a record of 24 million passengers. Regarding safety, at its current level of activity, National already experiences an above average number of missed approaches and early turnouts because of weather, high demand, airfield layout, and runway length. Additional daily flights would likely increase the number of missed approaches and early turnouts, disrupting an already complicated airspace and impacting safety. Additionally, National has limited capacity of airport infrastructure such as gates, ticket counters, baggage handling areas, and parking, which are currently being stretched thin to handle the existing level of commercial flights. Adding slots or an expanding National’s perimeter would further strain facilities at National.

Previous slot and perimeter changes have prevented Dulles from realizing its full potential as the primary long-haul flight destination for the Washington metropolitan area. The more expansive facilities at Dulles are structured to allow larger planes to land and take off, which yields efficiencies for customers, carriers, and our climate. In just the last decade, the federal government has spent significant amounts of money to bolster Dulles’s infrastructure. For example, Phase 2 of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s Metrorail Silver Line expansion opened less than six months ago and links the Washington metropolitan area to Dulles. The \$6.8 billion, 41-mile-long Silver Line is Metro's largest expansion since its creation in 1976. Further, a recently announced \$50 million grant from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide for construction of a new terminal at Dulles.

Our priority should be the safety and efficiency of flights, not the personal convenience of a comparatively small number of powerful and well-connected individuals. No Member of Congress appreciates another representative meddling with the assets in their state or district. We, too, strongly oppose any attempts by other Members and special interest groups to dictate operations at these airports for their own personal convenience at great cost to our communities and constituents.

For these reasons, we look forward to working with you to pass an FAA reauthorization bill this year that leaves intact the current rules governing operations at National.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer



Eleanor Holmes Norton




Jennifer Wexton



Gerald E. Connolly



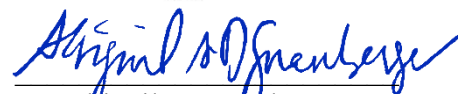
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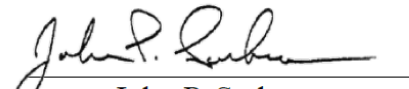
David Trone



Abigail D. Spanberger



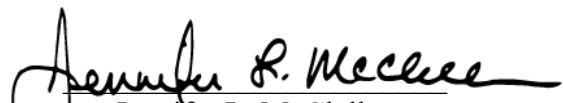
Jamie Raskin




John P. Sarbanes



Kweisi Mfume



Jennifer L. McClellan



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott



Glenn F. Lye

CC: Administrator Billy Nolen, Federal Aviation Administration