



# Aviation Noise: Federal Actions

# Authorizing and funding the FAA

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Congress authorizes and funds operations of the **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)**

The most recent authorization, the ***FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018***, extends the FAA's funding and authorities through Fiscal Year 2023.

# *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018*

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Subtitle D included 22 sections related to airport noise and environmental issues, including:

- Sec. 173: Alternative airplane noise metric evaluation deadline
- Sec. 174: Updating airport noise exposure maps
- Sec. 175: Addressing Community Noise Concerns
- Sec. 179: Airport noise mitigation and safety study
- Sec. 180: Regional Ombudsmen
- Sec. 187: Aircraft noise exposure
- Sec. 188: Study regarding day-night average sound levels
- Sec. 189: Study on potential health and economic impacts of overflight noise
- Sec. 192: Zero-emission vehicles and technology

# FAA's Noise Thresholds

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FAA uses the DNL (day-night average) noise *metric* and the 65 dB noise *threshold* for:

1. FAA **goals for reducing noise exposure.**
2. Compatible **land use guidelines** and eligibility for **noise mitigation funding** (within the 65 DNL contour) under the Aviation Safety and Noise Abatement Act of 1979 (ASNA) and 14 CFR Part 150
3. Determining significant **environmental impacts** under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)

# Lowering Noise Thresholds

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1. The **FAA** has *existing* regulatory authority to set the threshold.
  - 2018 Reauthorization directed FAA to reevaluate use of the DNL metric and the 65 dB DNL threshold and report to Congress.
  - This study is complete and currently in review.
2. Congress could lower the threshold by **legislation**.
  - Reps. Sherman, Schiff cosponsored the *Decrease Noise Level (DNL) Act* to lower the threshold to 60 dB immediately, 55 dB within 10 years.
3. Local **communities and airports** can agree to use a separate, lower threshold than 65 DNL for purposes of land use guidelines

# Government Accountability Office (GAO)

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The Government Accountability Office (GAO):

- Nonpartisan, independent watchdog agency
- Independent experts with broad authority to investigate and audit federal agencies

# GAO Investigation of NextGen

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Reps. Schiff and Sherman led a request in June

GAO will investigate whether FAA adequately:

- measures noise,
- mitigates impacts, and
- conducts public outreach

GAO will also make recommendations

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

June 18, 2019

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study how the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has considered community noise impacts while implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) in major metropolitan areas. Specifically, we request GAO to review how the FAA measures aircraft noise, how it evaluates and mitigates noise impacts, and the extent to which the FAA conducts public outreach and responds to public concerns about noise impacts.