

Progress sounds off after three years at Logan

11/4/16 Watertown TAB

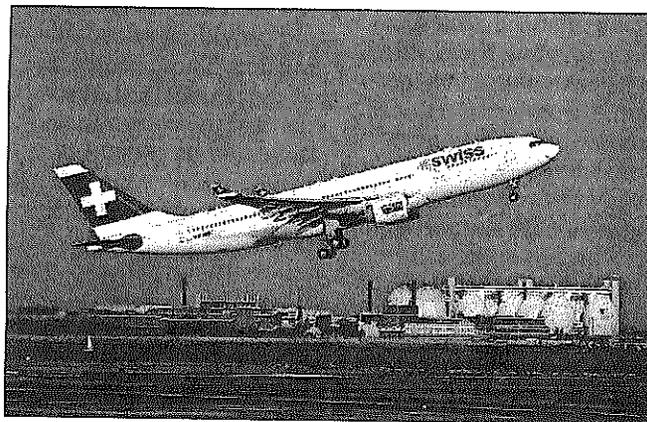
FAA to conduct study of airplane noise over Watertown and other communities

For the past three years since June 2013, Watertown has been one of several Massachusetts communities affected by changes the Federal Aviation Administration made to procedures followed by certain runways using GPS routing known as RNAV to fly more precise routes and therefore use airspace more efficiently. These changes have led to more frequent flights using route 33L over neighborhoods in Belmont, Arlington, Cambridge and Watertown.

According to Myron Kassaraba, Belmont representative to the Logan Community Advisory Committee and Massport Community Advisory Committee, foes of airport noise have a major breakthrough in

hand. Massport has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the FAA to study the issues with RNAV procedures that have affected communities throughout the country as part of their deployment of NextGen, a switch to satellite navigation. Logan has been selected as the test site for the RNAV study announced last week.

"Our hope is that there will be opportunities to increase the dispersion of the flight paths to be closer to the pre-RNAV operations that spread the flights over many communities and neighborhoods and that flights are able to ascend to a higher altitude more directly without leveling. Ideally both of these things could be used to decrease the impact to residents who currently live under the new flight paths. The affected communities are looking forward to participating in the process to ensure that our issues are well understood by the RNAV Study team," said Kassaraba.



An Airbus A330 in Swiss International Air Lines livery takes off from Boston's Logan Airport. CREATIVE COMMONS PHOTO / WIKIMEDIA USER ANTHONY92931

The process will be approximately six months. Runway 4R arrivals that approach Logan from the south over Milton and runway 33L departures that take off to the west over East Boston, Chelsea, Everett and in Medford split into four RNAV flight paths will be studied using resources at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in conjunction with Massport and the FAA.

In response to a letter sent

to the FAA on Aug. 9, signed by 12 state representatives and senators in affected communities, the FAA will meet with the 33L Municipal Working Group on Nov. 18. The working group was formed in 2015 with Belmont, Arlington, Cambridge, Medford, Somerville and Watertown to advocate for getting the 33L RNAV SID (standard instrument departure) procedure re-examined. The letter cited

responses by the FAA to make adjustments in Charlotte, North Carolina, and in Baltimore in response to requests from their cities' leadership.

"It's a positive development for the region. I think Massport has put itself in the leadership position working with the FAA to try to mitigate the new systems they are using nationally," said state Sen. William Brownsberger.

He commended the work of the citizens who formed the Boston West Fair Skies Group and reached out to their state representatives and senators.

"Airplane noise pollution can be a serious quality of life issue," said Congresswoman Katherine Clark in a press release issued by Massport Oct. 7. "Families I've met are concerned and frustrated with the persistent noise pollution that interferes with essential activities like sleeping, studying and doing business," she said.

Under the old radar system prior to June 2013,

the routes were dispersed so flights went over more neighborhoods in Belmont and other communities, but less frequently. Now, using RNAV, the routes are barely dispersed, meaning flights travel over fewer neighborhoods but at a far greater frequency. The route known as 33L affects neighborhoods in Belmont, Arlington, Cambridge and Watertown and is used primarily when there are northwest winds.

Learn more about impacts of air travel on environmental health

WHAT: Airport Impacts 101
WHEN: Saturday, Nov. 5, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
WHERE: Partners Healthcare, Assembly Square, 399 Revolution Drive, Somerville
REGISTER: <http://bit.ly/AirportImpacts101>