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A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEXTGEN AND ITS NATIONAL IMPACT (from Save Our Skies, Santa Cruz)

### WHAT IS NEXTGEN?

NextGen shifted the U.S. ground-based air traffic control system to a satellite-based system: GPS. The project in theory was supposed to cut costs by using GPS technology to save time, fuel and money, as well as curb traffic delays. Federal Auditors say any cost savings are unclear.

NextGen new arrival procedures mandate pilots turn at lower altitudes, much closer to the arrival points. The very design of NextGen focuses routes sharply onto thin lines. Thus, traffic that was previously dispersed over many miles of slightly randomized routes is now focused over the same area.

2010

The FAA funded NextGen for 4.5 billion for contractors Boeing, General Dynamics and ITT.

2012

### Federal Auditors warn on costs

Federal auditors say the project, which was hundreds of millions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule, was not worth the trouble. It was determined that the total costs for the current ADS-B [NextGen] program, including funding that had been spent, outweighed the projected benefits of the program by as much as \$588 million," according to the Inspector General report.

The FAA estimates it will cost about \$40 billion through 2035, And, like other government estimates, the Inspector General warns the price tag could climb even higher.

### Congress passes FAA Re-Authorization Bill

The FAA pushed a fast track bill thru congress by exempting itself from Environmental Impact review and

public hearings. The bill provides \$63.4 billion to fund the agency through 2015, including approximately \$11 billion towards the FAA's proposed Next Generation ("NextGen") air traffic control system.

## President signs Bill.

2014-2015

## FAA Mislead Local Officials On Expected Noise

Claiming no significant noise impact, the FAA again and again downplayed the potential noise impacts for new NextGen flight paths across the country in communication with local officials. An investigation by the city of Phoenix, Arizona showed the FAA did not contact any senior member of the Aviation Department prior to the major changes at Sky Harbor International Airport. Informing only low-ranking employees, many have accused the FAA of intentionally trying to "fly under the radar."

The fact is the FAA uses a meaningless noise evaluation standard called the Day-Night Average Sound Level. If the Day-Night Average Sound Level is under 65 decibels, the FAA's environmental studies conclude "No Significant Impact." However, the real-life experience of people on the ground proves this standard is completely flawed. It is equivalent to telling someone who attends a concert and stands directly in front of the blaring speaker for one hour that there was no significant impact on their hearing, because averaged over the day it was less than 65 decibels.

For example, in Santa Cruz County, CA, new flight paths have been implemented over rural areas with extremely low ambient noise levels. Even though loud jets are traveling overhead every 2-5 minutes, the lack of other background noise practically guarantees a finding of no significant impact once the noise levels are averaged. Understanding this, Ian Gregor FAA Public Affairs spokesman still claimed there would be "no reportable or significant increase in noise."

As such, they chose not to conduct any public outreach in Santa Cruz County prior to implementing new flight paths over the county.

## Noise Complaints Skyrocket

Airports across the country have become inundated with noise complaints. For example, in Chicago, more than 2 million noise complaints were received by O'Hare International Airport in the first 8 months of 2015 from 44,500 addresses. Following the implementation of NextGen in Northern California, residents from Santa Cruz County (a much smaller community) filed more than 12,000 noise complaints to San Francisco International Airport in June 2015—up from just one complaint for all of 2014.

## NextGen Noise Prompts Citizens to Organize and Act

Grass roots organizations have sprung up throughout the country in response to NextGen. Most initial actions have been to attempt meaningful dialogue with the FAA, working through their local public officials. Many have found the FAA to be unresponsive, and unwilling to address concerns in a timely manner. As a result, communities have begun holding public rallies, looking into legal measures and pursuing ways to recoup the decrease in their home values.

## Congress Begins to Take Note

The Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus was created in 2014 to address increasing aviation noise issues. Members of the Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus are advocating on behalf of communities experiencing the harmful impacts of aircraft noise. In 2015 they made sweeping suggestions to address noise issues and the FAA's community engagement process for inclusion into the 2015 Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act.

## Citizens Take Legal Action Against FAA

The City of Phoenix and a Coalition of Phoenix neighborhoods have filed lawsuits against the FAA on the basis of lack of a public process before moving the flight paths. Similarly in Northern California a group of citizens filed a lawsuit against the FAA, challenging the validity of the FAA's environmental assessment for 32 NextGen flight paths in the Northern California Metroplex. This lawsuit is unique in that it was filed within the narrow 60-day period allowed by law to challenge a Finding of No Significant Impact. A strategy used by the FAA to prevent litigation has been to delay roll out of new flight paths until after the 60 day statute of limitations has expired, so the true impact of the new paths are only experienced after it is too late for legal action.

## This is Just the Beginning

According to the FAA's 2015 NextGen Implementation Plan, the roll out is in various stages of completion in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Houston/North Texas, New York City, Chicago, Northern California, Atlanta, Charlotte, and Southern California. Many more areas will be impacted as NextGen continues to roll out including new flight paths in Florida, Cleveland/Detroit and Denver