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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON D.C. 20590

REMARKS PREPARED FOR ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE, AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE,
RELATING TO AIRCRAFT NOISE ABATEMENT, ROOM 6202, NEW SENATE
OFFICE BUILDING, MONDAY, JUNE 17, 1968, AT 11:00 A.M.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Alan S. Boyd, Secretary of Transportation. It is a pleasure to appear before your Subcommittee to present the views of the Department of Transportation on the very important subject of control of aircraft noise. The legislation enacted by the House of Representatives would mean that the Federal Government would require compliance with noise reduction standards as well as safety standards as a condition to the issuance of future aircraft type certificates.

A description of the aircraft noise abatement function that the Department of Transportation is now performing begins with some recent and relevant history which I would like to review with you. The President, in his message to Congress proposing the establishment of the Department of Transportation, recognized that "aircraft noise is a growing source of annoyance and concern to the thousands of citizens who live near many of our large airports." Further, he directed us to "embark now on a concerted effort to alleviate the problems of aircraft noise."

The President's Science Advisor, Dr. Hornig, with assistance from Federal and local Government representatives, as well as representatives from industry, studied the development of noise standards and the compatible uses of land near airports and the need for legislative and administrative actions to move ahead in this area. The Bill under consideration represents the outgrowth of one of the recommendations which Dr. Hornig's group made.

As of September 1, 1967, the responsibilities previously held by Dr. Hornig and his advisors and colleagues were transferred to the Department of Transportation and are carried out within the Office of the Secretary. We are now the focal point for Government-wide activity in the field of aircraft noise abatement. Later in my testimony, I will comment on how we have organized the implementation of these new responsibilities within the Department.

Our effort to find solutions to the problems associated with aircraft noise is part of a total departmental effort to insure that transportation activities do not adversely affect our natural environment.

Sections 2(b) (2) and 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act place upon the Secretary of Transportation, a major responsibility to insure that we preserve, to the maximum extent possible, the values of our society and the rich natural assets which we enjoy.

For those who must live surrounded by the din of normal city life, the whine of an increasing number of jet aircraft can make life almost intolerable for many who live below or near the path of flight. I am not here to tell you that there are easy solutions for the problem. But I am here to tell you that the Department of Transportation considers the problems of aircraft noise second only to safety.

Let me begin by saying that I do not believe there will ever be such a thing as a completely quiet airplane. Despite our far longer experience with the problems of truck noise and railroad noise, quiet vehicles in those modes of transportation have not been produced. I am convinced that we will be able, by technological and regulatory means, to reduce the impact of aircraft noise exposure for the majority of Americans who are now, or will potentially be, subject to excessive aircraft noise exposure.

Our approach to the problem looks at the total aircraft noise problem from engine start to shut down. We include both subsonic and supersonic aircraft and consider the sonic boom as well as noise generated by aircraft.

We have established Study Panels in eight major areas in which investigations are being conducted to identify the noise reduction potential within each of these areas. They are: aircraft noise research, aircraft operations, sonic boom research, airport and land use, natural environment, legal, structures, and human response. The Departments of HUD, Interior, Defense, Transportation and NASA are providing chairmen for the Panels and support for studies in these areas. Representatives from outside the Government have been and will continue to be solicited for their advice and recommendations of this program.

Although we have made improvements in some of these areas and research has been underway for some time, we must push far more vigorously for action programs to provide more positive results. We have a substantial base today upon which to initiate action and are taking and will increasingly take action to alleviate noise.

What we propose to do, in essence, if the pending legislation is backed, is to specify maximum allowable noise levels under certain defined conditions to be met by a manufacturer prior to an aircraft's certification by the Federal Aviation Administration. We believe that the aircraft industry, by and large, will benefit by the establishment of noise standards since all engine and aircraft builders will thereby be required to meet the same ground rules with respect to the noise output of their respective products. As to what will be the maximum allowable noise levels to be used for aircraft certification, we recognize that there will be study and consultation required prior to any final decision.

But let me make it very clear that the present technology which we have to produce a quieter engine, and that which we believe will be available within the short-range future, will not solve the aircraft noise problem. We believe that a noise reduction of between 10 to 20 in the Effective Perceived Noise Level (EPNdB) at the source will eventually be attained.

Recent tests have revealed that a reduction of 10 EPNdB provides far greater relief from noise than the number might indicate. These tests reveal that such a reduction produces 50 percent less annoyance. I think it is clear, from these tests, that the payoff from modest engine noise reduction is significant.

In conjunction with our concept of aircraft noise certification we also intend to continue our efforts to insure that Federal funds will not be expended for airports which have not provided for adjacent land utilization compatible with future noise exposure. This approach perhaps offers more hope for noise abatement for future airports than any other, but at the moment we still face the major problem of proliferated and unresponsive zoning authority in the areas surrounding the airport.

In the field of compatible land use, the Department is developing a computerized method of predicting aircraft noise exposure at airports. The methodology has been applied to three major airports, JFK, O'Hare, and Los Angeles International, and our planning envisions the application of this technique to assist in the land use planning at other airports throughout the country.

The absence of specific aircraft noise standards has retarded attempts by local authorities to evolve compatible land use plans in the vicinity of our airports since land use planners have not had a bench mark of noise that would allow them to perform realistic land use planning. The land use planners have been hesitant, and in many instances rightly so, to embark on complex and comprehensive plans if the likelihood exists that the noise environment will continue to increase by an order of magnitude with the introduction of noisier aircraft every few years. The passage of this legislation will be the foundation for reversing this trend.

We note that the bill passed by the House vests the authority to prescribe noise standards and to take appropriate certificate action with the Federal Aviation Administrator. In keeping with basic principles of Government organization and management, we believe that it would be more appropriate for that authority to be vested in the Secretary of Transportation.

In summary, we believe that aircraft noise levels have become a serious encroachment on the quality of the environment for large segments of the public. The accelerated growth of air transportation combined with the development of larger and more powerful aircraft, the enlargement of many airport facilities, and the engulfing of lands immediately surrounding our airports by urban communities all contribute to a growth of the noise problem on a national scale. All branches of the Federal government, as well as local officials, must act in a positive manner to check the growth of this problem if we are to see aviation continue to serve our Country's needs.

Let me conclude with a plea that you give speedy and favorable consideration to the legislation which would mean an effective beginning to the effort to reduce aircraft noise. As I have previously stated, it will not solve all the problems that face us in aircraft noise abatement, but it will be an essential instrument in finding solutions.

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