

Community Associations file Petition for Review of FAA decision regarding NextGen flight routes at DCA

1. On August 24, 2015, DC communities and a prominent University along the Potomac River filed a Petition for Review of the FAA's decision to adopt NextGen flight routes from Ronald Reagan National Airport (DCA). The so-called LAZIR routes were finalized for publication and use earlier this summer.
2. The LAZIR routes effectively move the northern departure corridor to historic and residential areas along the Potomac River including, among others: the National Mall; the Kennedy Center; Foggy Bottom; Georgetown; Georgetown University; Foxhall Village; Hillandale; Burleith; Colony Hill and the Palisades.
3. Since the summer of 2013, some of the communities started noticing increased noise and vibrations from flights going in and out of Reagan over their homes. It has become intolerable since then and well into what used to be regarded as “curfew hours” in DC from 10:00 pm-7:00 am. DCA is no longer deemed a regional airport and most aircraft are now certified as “quiet” by the FAA and therefore are no longer subject to the curfew. Congress has made multiple exceptions to the perimeter rule, which used to restrict DCA to short haul flights using smaller, less noisy planes. The result is that DCA has available slots 24/7, which are starting to be used by multiple airlines. Flights now start as early as 5:10 am and arrivals are well past midnight with greater frequency. Departures/landings from Dulles have decreased while Reagan flight operations have increased to the point where Reagan has more air traffic than Dulles.
4. The community associations that have joined together to file objections to the LAZIR routes are: Hillandale, Burleith, Citizens Association of Georgetown, Colony Hill, Foxhall, Foggy Bottom and the Palisades, in addition to Georgetown University.
5. The Petition for Review filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on behalf of those non-profit neighborhood groups and Georgetown University seeks to overturn the LAZIR departure routes approved by the FAA for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The basis for the lawsuit and a companion Petition to the FAA is that the FAA has not done an environmental assessment of the new LAZIR routes as required by federal law and in particular has not considered the impact of the significantly increased noise levels on the affected residential communities and students. The Petition to the FAA seeks reinstatement of the prior departure route, National 328, until such time as a proper environmental assessment of any new departure route has been performed.