

# THE VTOL ADVOCATE

*Keeping Your Rotors Turning*



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#### **FAA Opens Public Comment Period, Will Host Webinar Series on Noise Policy Review**

This week, the FAA published a Federal Register notice (FRN) seeking public comment as it undertakes a noise policy review (NPR) as part of its ongoing effort to tackle aircraft noise. In addition to accepting public comment through Jul. 31, the agency will discuss the NPR and answer audience questions in a series of online webinars on May 16, 18, 23, and 25 that it will also livestream on its YouTube channel.

The NPR will examine various crucial elements of the policy, including evaluating the ability of the FAA's primary noise metric, DNL (day-night average sound level), to assess cumulative aircraft noise exposure, and exploring other noise metrics that could be used in place of or in conjunction with DNL. The goal of the NPR is to enhance the FAA's disclosure of noise impacts and make better-informed agency decisions. The FAA will also consider public and stakeholder feedback received in response to the FRN and the webinars.

The NPR will not only assess the effects of aircraft noise exposure on communities, but also explore ways to manage and address community concerns about aviation noise, including identifying strategies for enhancing communication about noise-related actions the agency proposes.

HAI encourages our members to participate in the NPR, whether by submitting comments to the FRN, attending or watching the livestream of the online webinars and asking questions, or both. [Learn more about the NPR process.](#)

## Potential Candidates Under Consideration to Head the FAA

According to news and technology company Axios, Mike Whitaker, a former high-ranking FAA official, is being considered to lead the agency, although the White House has not made a final decision to nominate him. Whitaker has a strong background in the aviation industry. Currently the chief operating officer of Supernal, an advanced air mobility (AAM) company, he served from 2013 to 2016 as FAA deputy administrator and chief NextGen officer leading the modernization of the air traffic control system. Before that, he spent 15 years overseeing international and regulatory affairs at United Airlines.

Also in the mix according to other sources: Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board. Homendy has recently had an elevated profile with her agency at the forefront of investigating a series of aviation close calls.

The FAA has been without a Senate-confirmed leader for more than a year. As readers may recall, President Biden's nominee, Phil Washington, withdrew his nomination in March amid Senate opposition. More recently, Acting Administrator Billy Nolen announced his plans to leave the agency this summer. With air traffic projected to rebound to prepandemic levels this summer, the public expressing frustration about flight cancellations and delays, and the above-mentioned runway close calls, stable leadership at the FAA is of utmost importance.

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, responsible for reviewing nominations for the FAA, has not yet been notified by the White House of any serious potential candidate. As always, HAI will remain close to this story and inform readers of any major updates.

## FAA Establishes Independent Aviation Safety Review Team

Last week, the FAA announced that it had appointed an independent safety review team charged with examining potential ways to improve safety and reliability in the country's air traffic system. The team will thoroughly assess the current situation and present specific recommendations about how the agency can improve air traffic safety. The announcement of the FAA National Airspace System Safety Review Team follows a safety summit in March, where safety officials from the aviation industry convened to discuss recent near collisions on runways at busy airports. The safety review team will begin its work this month, completing activities by October 2023.

In the weeks since its safety summit, the FAA has taken numerous steps to improve safety in the air traffic system, including issuing a safety alert to airlines, pilots, and affiliated parties to maintain alertness during taxi, takeoff, and landing procedures. Other steps involve the FAA Air Traffic Organization implementing several measures, such as ensuring that supervisors are fully attentive to the operation and airfield during peak traffic periods, and the FAA airports division holding a seminar on implementing safety management systems (SMSs).

[Learn more](#) about the National Airspace System Safety Review Team members and the actions that came out of the safety summit.

## HAI International News

### European Green Deal

Last week, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (EU) reached a political agreement on the ReFuelEU Aviation proposal, which the EU Commission welcomes. The new rules aim to decarbonize the aviation industry by mandating fuel suppliers to blend sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) with kerosene in growing quantities beginning in 2025.

By requiring fuel suppliers to blend SAF, the ReFuelEU Aviation proposal is expected to cut aircraft carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by about two-thirds by 2050, compared with a scenario where no action is taken. Additionally, this measure will lead to a reduction in non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, resulting in climate and air quality benefits. Agreement on the proposal marks the final deal on the transport proposals included in the EU Commission's Fit for 55 package.

The new rules will require:

- **Aviation fuel suppliers** to supply a minimum share of SAF at EU airports, starting at 2% of overall fuel supplied by 2025 and reaching 70% by 2050. The new EU jet fuel blend will also need to contain a minimum share of the most modern and environmentally friendly synthetic fuels.
- **Aircraft operators** departing from EU airports to refuel only with the fuel necessary for the flight, to avoid emissions related to extra weight.
- **Airports** to ensure that their fueling infrastructure is available and fit for SAF distribution.

According to the European Commission, the blending mandate covers biofuels, recycled carbon fuels, and synthetic aviation fuels (e-fuels) consistent with the renewable energy directive. Because it will apply throughout the EU, the new mandate will ensure a level playing field within the EU internal market, provide legal certainty to fuel producers, and help kick-start large-scale production across the continent. It will also increase the EU's energy security by reducing dependencies on third-country-sourced energy products and create thousands of new jobs in the energy sector.

Last week's political agreement requires formal adoption by Parliament and the Council. Once this process is completed, the new legislation will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and enter into force with immediate effect.

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#### Helicopter Association International

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