



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20591

August 21, 2012

The Honorable Keith Ellison  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Ellison:

Thank you for your June 20 letter about the increased number of noise complaints from neighborhoods near Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP).

You also request us to clarify whether or not the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the authority to tell pilots where to turn, and whether this option is being considered for MSP. Once the departing aircraft has attained a safe altitude after takeoff, the air traffic controller does have the authority to instruct pilots to make turns, if there are no obstructions that could be a safety factor.

You also proposed as a fix for some of these noise problems to delay the turn for Runway 30R departures until they reach the middle marker. However, this is no longer an option. The middle marker for that departure area was removed several years ago, so there currently is no middle marker available for aircraft departing Runway 30R to use as a reference turn point.

We agree with you that local communities have the right to have their concerns addressed. That is why local FAA representatives have been working collaboratively with the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), the City of Minneapolis, and local resident groups to address the noise issues that recently have been elevated. The primary point of collaboration is through the MAC's Noise Oversight Committee (NOC).

In 2011, we studied summer traffic periods when the airport was operating in a north flow (departing Runway 30R and overflying the Erickson and Standish neighborhoods) between 2007 and 2011. We chose the summer periods since this is the time when aircraft performance is the lowest (higher temperatures with slower aircraft climb rates) and local residents are more likely to be outside. The results of the study indicated the following:

- *Aircraft were not flying over areas that previously were not overflown* - The data for the time period studied indicated that the air traffic had actually shifted slightly west. However, the data did not indicate that aircraft were flying over areas that previously had not been regularly overflown.

