



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Stella Koch, Chairman *Stella M. Koch*
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

DATE: March 21, 2019

SUBJECT: Airport Noise Policies

EQAC is aware that a plan amendment that would support residential uses within Land Unit J of the Dulles Suburban Center is currently being considered by the Planning Commission (PA 2018-III-DS1). This is an area that is impacted by aircraft-generated noise from Dulles Airport. Much of this area falls within the county's adopted airport noise contours (areas of DNL 60 dBA or greater) for which present policy recommends against new residential uses. This current Comprehensive Plan policy was created to avoid adverse impacts to residential uses. It is important to note that these contour designations represent projected future average noise levels and not necessarily the maximum noise that would be experienced during each aircraft overflight.

EQAC notes in its 2018 Annual Report on the Environment Transportation Chapter that "[n]oise impacts from air and ground transportation sources as well as infrastructure construction are concerns for residents and for the local environment." Fairfax has prided itself on creating a high quality of life for its residents and, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan, this policy specifically was created to "provide for the highest level of protection of the public health, safety and welfare." We have concerns that allowing residential development in areas with high noise levels would create adverse impacts on residents and impact the ability of homeowners to have full use of their properties, particularly in light of the recent updates to the noise contours by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA).

EQAC further notes that this plan amendment would take a policy that is broadly applicable to a large area and create an exception within a limited area. This action would raise concerns about the differential treatment of land uses within various areas and would set a precedent for future exceptions to this policy in other areas.

Additionally, as stated in the Comprehensive Plan, "[a]s new appropriate noise contours become available, this information will be brought before the Board of Supervisors so that appropriate modifications can be made, if necessary, to the Comprehensive Plan to reflect the most recent and most appropriate delineation of the Dulles Airport Noise Impact Area to which land use compatibility policies will be applied."

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Given the recent release of updated noise contours by MWAA and the implications of supporting new residential uses within noise-impacted areas, EQAC recommends a more careful and broader look at this concept.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

SMK: jcg

cc: Fairfax County Planning Commission