



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

New England Region
Office of the Regional Administrator

1200 District Avenue
Burlington, MA 01803

JAN 23 2017

Mr. Kevin Dorn, City Manager
City of South Burlington
575 Dorset Street
South Burlington VT 05403

Dear Mr. Dorn:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Burlington International Airport's Part 150 noise study. We understand the City of South Burlington's concern regarding airport noise. In an effort to alleviate the impacts of noise to the local community, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has provided approximately \$57 million in noise mitigation funding in and around South Burlington since the late 1980s.

Your letter requests FAA support for noise modeling of the F-35 aircraft that are to be deployed to this airport. The FAA discussed this matter with the City of Burlington, as the airport operator, a few years ago when the deployment of the F-35 was approved by the Department of Defense. The City of Burlington and the FAA jointly decided that it was not appropriate at that time to include the F-35 noise in the modeling effort.

There were two reasons for this. First, we felt the additional expenditure of public funds was not appropriate until we had more assurance the F-35 would actually be deployed to Burlington. Second, even if we did include the F-35 noise modeling, we could not provide funding to mitigate that noise until it was actually present in the community.

Until recently, it was our understanding the F-35 would be deployed to this airport in 2019 or 2020. Based upon that, we had anticipated a revised Noise Exposure Map in 2018 or 2019. The actual deployment of the F-35 at Burlington continues to be uncertain. It would be inadvisable for us to commit resources to any earlier noise modeling.

Your letter cites two reasons for modeling the F-35 now. First, the City of South Burlington would know where to focus their efforts to update the zoning bylaw. Second, it would provide homeowners important information when making certain decisions.

Fortunately, sufficient information already exists to meet both these needs. The Department of Defense completed an extensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2012 which included noise contour maps for the F-35. This public information is readily available and shows considerable detail as to where the noise contours may grow. We would suggest you review this data to see if they meet your needs. The document can be found at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/799815-f-35-final-eis-volume-1.html>

You raise two other factors that you feel support earlier modeling of the F-35 noise. First, you consider the possibility the future noise contour may shrink. From our review of the data provided by the Department of Defense, it appears the F-35 deployment will increase noise in the local community. This data indicates that the F-35 noise signature is louder than the F-16. The EIS shows the number of homes experiencing noise levels of 65DNL or greater will increase by several hundred homes.

Second, you suggest that the noise contours may contract over the next two years. Even if that were to occur, we would not alter a long-running mitigation effort for such a short-term change when it is clear the overall noise environment is anticipated to become more noisy, not less.

You have asked for a “seat at the table” with us when decisions are being made regarding noise at Burlington International Airport. We are happy to meet with your representatives when you meet with the City of Burlington on these matters and suggest you coordinate these meetings with Gene Richards, Director of Aviation.

We look forward to working with you to mitigate the impacts of noise on the residents of South Burlington. Further, detailed discussions on these issues may be directed to the Airports Division Environmental Program Manager, Richard Doucette. He has worked on the Noise Compatibility Program in Burlington for several years. He can be reached at 781-238-7613.

If you require further information, please contact Julie Seltsam-Wilps of my staff at (781) 238-7389 or julie.a.seltsam@faa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy L. Corbett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Amy L. Corbett
Regional Administrator