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May 23, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science, & Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science, & Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

Reference: Reagan Washington National Airport Perimeter and Slot Rules

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express our significant concerns with efforts at changing the slot and perimeter rules at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).

Reagan Washington National Airport has been subject to the high-density (slot) rule, which caps the maximum number of takeoffs and landings per hour, since 1969, and the perimeter rule, which currently limits nonstop flights beyond 1,250 miles from the airport, since 1966. These rules maintain system balance and create a safe operating environment for the region's air traffic. They also help mitigate noise issues for neighborhoods in the flight path of DCA, which is important to many of our residents. Over the past decade, the implementation of the federal Next Generation Air Transportation System has resulted in flight paths concentrated over certain communities. In particular, the concentration of flight paths for arrivals and departures to the south of DCA has resulted in a significant intensification in noise over residential areas in the County along those flight paths. Increasing the number of flights to DCA will only exacerbate this problem.

In addition to managing congestion and assuring passenger safety, the perimeter rule is essential for maintaining a balance between the constrained and overcrowded DCA and the much-larger Dulles International Airport (IAD), which is prepared, and has the space, to handle larger planes and lengthier flights. Unfortunately, throughout the years, 20 exemptions have been made to the perimeter rule, causing operational and financial issues for the region's airports. Adding additional exemptions will likely exacerbate those issues.

Further, the region, the Commonwealth, and the federal government have made significant investments in transportation projects to further spur growth at Dulles, including the recently completed Metrorail Silver Line extension. Silver Line Phase 2, which opened in November 2022, provides a one-seat ride from Dulles to downtown Washington, D.C., and to the entire region. The

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full Silver Line extension was a \$6 billion investment, with \$900 million provided by the federal government for Phase 1 of the project through the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program, as well as \$403 million in financing from the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program for Phase 2. Since the Phase 2 opening, over 700,000 trips have originated at its six new stations, with over 230,000 of those boarding at Dulles Airport. Maintaining the existing perimeter and slot rules are essential to the success of these efforts.

In 1987, Washington Dulles International and Washington National Airports were transferred to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) under a 50-year lease authorized by federal law. Like other airport authorities in the country, MWAA (whose Board of Directors is comprised of appointees from the Governors of Virginia and Maryland, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., and the President of the United States) is best positioned to develop, promote, and safely operate both airports, while also considering economic development and local concerns such as noise and congestion. MWAA has indicated its support of retaining the perimeter and slot rules.

The interconnectedness of Virginia's and the mid-Atlantic's aviation system makes the continued success of both airports vital to both the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Washington Metropolitan region. As such, we request your support in preventing further efforts to modify the perimeter and slot rules to protect the balance between the capacities of our region's airports.

We thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 324-2321 or Fairfax County's Legislative Director, Claudia Arko, at (703) 324-2647.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. McKay  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Mark Warner, United States Senate  
The Honorable Tim Kaine, United States Senate  
The Honorable Don Beyer, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Jennifer Wexton, United States House of Representatives  
Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
Members, Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly  
Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Claudia Arko, Legislative Director  
Gregg Steverson, Acting Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation