

# Teterboro flight path meant to cut noise is rarely used

## Hackensack leads way in pressing for change

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HACKENSACK — City officials are questioning why a new flight path into Teterboro Airport announced last year, after more than a decade of lobbying for change, is hardly used.

The alternative flight pattern diverts air traffic away from Hackensack University Medical Center and high-rise buildings along Prospect Avenue. Instead, pilots, who were trained on the new route in July, were to fly along the Route 17 corridor in their approach to the airport. But data released this month revealed that the flight path was minimally used at night and almost never during the day.

Pilots landing on Runway 19 — the busiest runway at the airport — used the new approach less than 1% of the time. Out of nearly 9,000 total flights since January, just 79 have used the flight path. At night, the usage was slightly higher, at nearly 10%. So far in 2022, a sound monitor on Prospect Avenue showed an average of 60.6 decibels, 3.4 higher than in 2021 and 1.6 above pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

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# Airport

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This came as no surprise to officials and high-rise residents, who say the deafening noise from aircraft continues unabated.

"On Sunday afternoon they aren't even two minutes apart all day," said Kathleen Canestrino, the deputy mayor. "The weather is getting nicer, and people can't be outside their homes. You can't watch television with the windows open."

At the time the flight path was announced, Federal Aviation Administration officials said it would take 45 days to train pilots and estimated that about a third of the flights coming into Teterboro would use the new approach.

Arlene Salac, a spokeswoman for the FAA, said the path is a viable alternative for pilots to use, but that the decision on what approach to take is at their discretion.

## 'It's just intolerable'

Residents who have lived with the noise for years say they are frustrated with the lack of change and are concerned about the possibility of an accident in the densely populated area. In 2017, a jet crashed in Carlstadt, killing the pilot and co-pilot.

"We were very hopeful, because it took years to accomplish this," said Annette Jankowski, chairwoman of the city's Condo and Co-op Advisory Board. "They fly so low, if you live on the higher floors and are sitting on a balcony, you can literally see the numbers on the plane. It's just intolerable at this point."

Tensions between the airport and its neighbors have been building for years. The Teterboro Aircraft Noise Abatement Advisory Committee was formed in the late 1980s to create a dialogue between the airport and the surrounding communities. Local officials on the committee have been campaigning for more than a decade for the FAA to alter the flight path.

When it opened in 1919 as the first airport in the metropolitan area, Teterboro accommodated single-engine planes.

But traffic into the airport has increased to roughly 170,000 takeoffs and landings a year, and the noise has grown louder as larger jets with more powerful engines use the runways.

Teterboro serves as a reliever airport, taking on some of the non-scheduled air traffic that would cause congestion at the region's commercial airports. Its proximity to New York makes it attractive for corporate jets, which are limited to 100,000 pounds, and it also plays a key role in the transport of lifesaving organs.

**"There really has been no improvement. Our people should be represented."**

**Ray Arroyo**  
Mayor of Westwood

## Complaints beyond Hackensack

Recently, towns farther afield have begun advocating for relief from the noise. Mayors in the Pascack Valley now say their residents are being disturbed and have asked for a seat on the advisory committee, which limits membership to a 5-mile radius of the airport.

"There really has been no improvement," said Ray Arroyo, the Westwood mayor. "Our people should be represented."

Carlos Rendo, the mayor of Woodcliff Lake, said he's frustrated with the lack of answers from the airport and the FAA.

"They give us this dog-and-pony solution with no solutions," he said. "At least on the weekends, they should divert the traffic so people can enjoy being outside with their families."

But not everyone is unhappy with the flight path's limited use.

"We're glad they haven't taken advantage of it, because would impact more Paramus residents," said Richard LaBarbiera, the borough's mayor. "The alternate route takes one problem and just moves it somewhere else. If anything, it is accommodating the few at the expense of many."

Under the new flight pattern, instead of flying over Hackensack University Medical Center, planes would travel near where The Valley Hospital is building an \$800 million, seven-story facility and would disturb countless residents in the area, LaBarbiera said.

"It's like people who buy a house on a highway and then complain and ask for sound barriers," he said. "The airport's been there for 100 years — it's not like it just dropped in from nowhere. That's what you signed up for. To change it now is changing the rules of the game halfway through."

Hackensack officials say they will keep demanding answers as to why the flight path is not being used. And they are asking for the airport to replace windows and install air conditioning at Hillers Elementary School, where teachers have to close windows on hot days just to be heard.

"If you want to be a good neighbor, then realize you are in a densely populated county and you have to be considerate of the folks who live here," said Canestrino, the Hackensack deputy mayor. "We have a solution; let's use it."

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