

**New York City Economic Development Corporation**

New York City Council Oversight Hearing:

Modifying Helicopter Routes to Reduce Noise over Residential Neighborhoods

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Good morning, Chairman Vallone and members of the Economic Development Committee. I am David Hopkins and I serve as the Senior Director of Aviation at NYCEDC. I am joined by my colleague Alexander Brady, Vice President in our Asset Management division and Justine Johnson, Vice President in our Government and Community Relations department. Today, I will give a brief overview of NYCEDC's oversight over the tour helicopter industry and its management of two of the City's heliports and then touch on Intro. T2015-3470, which would require that NYCEDC produce an annual sightseeing plan for tour helicopters. After my testimony, we will be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

It is important to begin any conversation of aviation with an overview of the regulatory structure of the industry. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the sole authority to control all U.S. non-military air space and determines the rules and requirements for its use. This means that the FAA has the sole authority to determine aircraft manufacturing standards, operations and maintenance, flight paths and altitudes, as well as the designation of airports and heliports, and the regulation of aircraft noise. Aircraft noise is regulated through standards, which are promulgated internationally, established by regulation nationally, and applied when an aircraft is acquiring its airworthiness certification. The standard requires that the aircraft meet or fall below designated noise levels. For helicopters, two different stages exist, Stage 1 and Stage 2. The FAA adopted the latest international standards for helicopters, Stage 3, on March 4, 2014. New helicopter models certificated after that date must meet the quieter Stage 3 standard. The aircraft currently operating at our heliports are almost exclusively Stage 2 helicopters.

NYCEDC, per an agreement with the City, manages the lease for the City owned JFK and LaGuardia airports and oversees the operations of the two heliports owned by the City—one downtown and the other at E34<sup>th</sup> Street. The heliport at West 30<sup>th</sup> is under the purview of Hudson River Trust, a state entity.

The three heliports in Manhattan are critical components of our transportation infrastructure. They operate as a system, with the E. 34<sup>th</sup> St facility focused on corporate traffic, the W. 30<sup>th</sup> St. facility focused on charter and corporate traffic, and the downtown heliport focused on tourism. The E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. facility is open from 8AM to 8PM on weekdays and is closed on weekends. The downtown facility is open for tours from 9AM to 7PM Monday through Saturday. No tour flights are allowed on Sunday; corporate and charter flights are allowed from 9-5. The downtown heliport is also unique in that it is the only facility that can accommodate the military helicopters used for presidential visits. Last year there were about 54,000 total landings. The downtown heliport at Pier 6, which is the largest facility, accommodated almost 33,000 of those. Compared to 2015, the year before the tour reduction plan went into effect, total helicopter traffic has been reduced by about 33% and at the downtown facility volumes are down by almost 50%.

While NYCEDC oversees the facilities, their day-to-day management is handled by our concessionaries: Atlantic Aviation at E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. and Saker Aviation at the downtown heliport. The agreement with Saker Aviation expires in April 2021, while the Atlantic Aviation agreement expires at the end of the year. A Request for Proposals will be issued this spring for a new operator. The concession agreements define the terms and conditions for how the facilities will be operated. Hours of operation are established, insurance levels set and terms of payment are noted. The terms of the tour helicopter reduction plan have been incorporated into the Saker agreement and the terms of the special permit that the Council renewed last year for E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. will be added into the RFP requirements.

Now I would like to provide a brief overview of the modifications that have been made to tour flights. In 2010, tour flights were eliminated from W. 30<sup>th</sup> and since that time, all tour flights have been conducted from the downtown heliport. In early 2010, the increase in volume downtown led EDC to convene operators, the Federal Aviation Administration and local elected officials in revising the tour routes. Tours over areas such as Central Park were eliminated and two mandated tour routes established. Both left the downtown heliport via the Buttermilk Channel between Governors Island and Red Hook then circled the Statue of Liberty before proceeding up the Hudson River. The shorter tour (Tour Alpha) turned back south along the Hudson near the 79<sup>th</sup> St. boat basin and the longer tour (Tour Bravo) continued across Manhattan to 155<sup>th</sup> Street to provide a view of Yankee Stadium. Both tour routes were above water at

almost all times and their altitudes ranged from 900 to 1500 feet except when landing or taking off.

In 2016, Mayor DeBlasio and the City Council announced that we would reduce the number of flights by 50%. We also eliminated any tour flights over land, including Governors Island, Staten Island and the route over Yankee stadium, and we prohibited Sunday operations. These efforts have eliminated approximately 30,000 tour flights annually.

EDC also tracks complaints made about helicopters through the 311 system. Most of the complaints the City receives are not related to tour flights. Instead, they tend to be about helicopters that are hovering or flying over other areas of the City. In 2014, 1299 complaints were made about helicopters through the 311 system. 162 of these related to tour operations. In 2017, 988 helicopter complaints were made and 76 of those related to tours. The 24% reduction in overall complaints is contrasted against a more than 50% reduction in tour complaints in the first full year after the tour helicopter reduction plan was put into place.

On Sunday March 11<sup>th</sup> a photography tour flight tragically crashed into the East River. The helicopter involved in that accident flew out of a New Jersey heliport and not from an EDC facility. The helicopter was operating doors off with the passengers tightly strapped in. Reports indicate that one of the passengers' personal items hit the emergency engine shut off causing the helicopter to go down in the East River. The NTSB continues to investigate and should release its findings several months from now. As a result of this tragedy and in partnership with the New York City Council we proactively reached an agreement with Saker Aviation to ban all door-off sightseeing tours.

Our partnership with the City Council is important as we work to ensure that any resident or tourist that wants to take a helicopter tour does so in the safest manner and with minimal impact to the residents below. And we understand that the only way to make strategic adjustments to flight paths and heliport operations is through the collection of accurate data. Our heliport operator Saker Aviation sends a report to the Council each month, which summarizes the number of flights, identifies whether pilots took the appropriate routes over water, and summarizes findings from 311 complaints. In cases of noncompliance, NYCEDC has the authority to mandate a further reduction in allowed flights and impose a fine of \$1,000 per infraction.

Recently, we have begun to share a report that details air quality at our facilities. Lastly, in accordance with our agreement, our operator is actively researching available technologies to further mitigate helicopter noise, reduce emissions, and promote fuel efficiency we look forward to sharing the results of that research once complete.

I've spent the majority of my testimony focused on the tour industry and our efforts to reduce those impacts. I'd be remiss if I did not acknowledge the issue that Western Queens residents face from Charter flights going to the Hamptons. The routing of these flights over LaGuardia Airport means that the helicopters fly over neighborhoods such as College Point, Whitestone, and Bayside, while these flights move over water as they travel further east along the North Shore near Nassau and Suffolk Counties. As I stated previously, NYCEDC does not have the ability to regulate the flight path of any charter flight. The FAA mandates that the City heliports be open for public use and our concession agreements reflect this. We have advocated and will continue to advocate to the FAA that they reevaluate the allowable flight path for these charter flights. EDC would welcome participating in any working group that might be convened with the FAA on the issue.

Now to pre-considered Intro. T2015-3470, which would require that NYCEDC produce an annual helicopter sightseeing plan in consultation with the community, industry and advocates. We feel that the sightseeing plan called for in the legislation is mostly captured in our concession agreement with Saker, and as you know, we recently extended that agreement. We look forward to discussing with the Council in greater detail what additional information could be useful and a reporting timeframe that makes most sense. We look forward to working with the sponsor and Council to ensure that the legislation accomplishes the goals of reducing the impacts of helicopters on communities.

Thank you for your attention today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

## Testimony in Favor of Resolution 178

Thank you to Chairperson Vallone, Chairperson Constantinides and members of the Committee for allowing me to offer testimony in favor of Resolution 178.

On March 24th 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo directed the Port Authority to establish aviation community roundtables. Governor Cuomo further directed the Port Authority to conduct a Federal Airport Noise Compatibility Planning Part 150 Study to better evaluate noise impacts to the communities surrounding JFK and LGA airports. I currently serve as Co-Chair of the New York Community Aviation Roundtable (NYCAR). Elected officials, community boards, governmental agencies, airlines, airport industry groups, business organizations and community stakeholders are Roundtable members. NYCAR represents more than 4 million residents of Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Nassau County. I'm also a member of the LGA Airport Part 150 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Vice Chair of CB 7 and chair of the CB 7 Aviation Committee. We represent the communities being negatively impacted by noise from charter helicopters traveling between the East End of Long Island and Manhattan.

Today you're going to hear testimony containing technical aviation terms and confusing data. The truth though, is that none of this is terribly difficult. It's merely about unwanted noise coming from helicopter charter companies doing business in New York City. While passengers may view the helicopters as a convenience, for communities under the flight path the helicopters are a nuisance and health concern. Passengers heading out East, depart Manhattan, arrive in the Hamptons and proceed to spend large sums of money on the East End. These charters while victimizing the communities below, provide little or no benefit to New York City. In addition, the charters are used solely for recreational travel with passengers paying from \$600 to more than \$1,500 per flight.

Noise from helicopters will often be greater than that from large planes. Helicopters will fly at lower altitudes, which puts the noise closer to the ground and at lower speeds, which results in the disturbance lasting longer. Additionally, wake turbulence is not as-

sociated with helicopter operation, which means they can fly with little or no separation between flights and with greater frequency. Helicopters can be thought of as oversized lawn mowers. However, there is a solution. The FAA must mandate an all-water route for charter helicopters traveling between Manhattan and the East End of Long Island. The Economic Development Corporation, which operates many of the heliports within New York City must also take steps to ensure that the helicopter charter companies are responsible citizens. If necessary, EDC can suspend the arrival and departure privileges of inconsiderate operators.

A report by the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority has shown aircraft noise to be a major stressor impacting cardiovascular disease, children's learning ability, sleep disturbance, nocturnal patterns, psychological matters, pregnancy and obesity.

Residences, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, places of worship and recreational areas are all adversely impacted by helicopter noise.

The New York Community Aviation Roundtable supports Resolution 178.

Thank you.

Warren Schreiber

Co-Chair, New York Community Aviation Roundtable

Vice Chair and Aviation Chair, Queens Community Board 7

13-24 Bell Blvd, Bayside, NY 11360

[warrennyc@gmail.com](mailto:warrennyc@gmail.com)

917-494-2247



**Remarks from Deputy Director Sam Goldstein on**

- **Committee Oversight hearing on “Modifying helicopter routes to reduce noise over residential neighborhoods” and,**
- **Preconsidered Int. “This bill would require the entity that administers economic development benefits on the City’s behalf – currently the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) – to produce an annual helicopter sightseeing plan in consultation with community advocates, industry representatives and other experts referred by the Mayor or Speaker of the Council.”**

April 18, 2018

City Council Committee Room

My name is Sam Goldstein and I am Deputy Director of the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council (HTJC). HTJC represents the employees and customers of the Air Tour industry in New York City.

Legislation discussed today aims to create an annual sightseeing plan for New York City and oversight aimed at helicopter noise over residential neighborhoods.

Air tour operators in NYC are very familiar with annual plans, as our tours are the only helicopters operating under a structured set of regulations that ensure community concerns are alleviated while providing customers with an unforgettable viewing experience.

These regulations include:

- One designated heliport to conduct air tours from.
- Set hours and days of operation including no tour flights on Sunday.
- An established route that keeps tour flights over water and does not permit flights from crossing over any area of land.
- Monthly caps on flights allowed to operate out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.
- Monitoring of Air Quality.

Measures in place ensure flights do not deviate from the above restrictions. They also limit noise, which is supported by the fact that air tours constitute a very small percentage of total noise complaints to the city related to helicopters. Other helicopters- news gathering, charter, emergency services, have none of the same restrictions are most often the source of residential complaints.

Contrary to some public statements by proponents of today’s and other legislation, operators do not fly off route or operate at greater volumes than permitted. The consequences of even one flight in violation of these rules are strict and effective in guaranteeing operator compliance.

As we have been with our partners at the City and EDC, the air tour industry is happy to be a partner in any working group with community members and elected officials.

**Testimony of Michael Gannon, President Douglas Manor Association  
before the Committee on Economic Development.**

Hon. Paul A. Vallone Chair

April 18, 2018

**RE: Res 0178-2018;** A Resolution calling on the Federal Aviation Administration to amend the North Shore helicopter route to extend further west to cover Northeast Queens.

Councilman Vallone and EDC Committee Members:

The Douglas Manor Association supports Resolution 0178-2018 as introduced by Councilmen Vallone and Constantinides.

The DMA is a homeowners association representing 595 families in the North East Queens community of Douglas Manor, a peninsular of land jutting into Little Neck Bay and Long Island Sound at the Queens - Nassau County border long troubled by helicopter noise.

Our community receives the brunt of the traffic as helicopters enter and leave the FAA's North Shore Route at the Nassau County line. While the noise and disruption to our quality of life peaks on Friday and Sunday during the summer vacation time period, it remains a year round problem.

Please support this resolution which extends the North Shore route westward to include Queens County.

Thank you

Contact: DMA

234 -21 B 41st Avenue

Douglaston, NY 11363

718 225-3111

[office@dmanyc.org](mailto:office@dmanyc.org)

**DMA is a 501 c 4 Not For Profit Corporation**



April 18, 2018

Dear members of the NY City Council,

In many ways, the tour helicopters pose serious problems for the health and safety of people living in New York. They are dangerous, noisy, polluting, and unnecessary.

The noise of tour helicopters continues to plague the upper west side. Their terrible noise has eroded our quality of life substantially. Loudness can be measured: An idling motorcycle registers at 70 decibels. An accelerating motorcycle is 80 decibels. Each additional ten decibels means that the noise is twice as loud. A jackhammer is 100 decibels. A helicopter is 105 decibels.

Their noise is everywhere! Helicopters can be heard at least a mile away. Their window-rattling din pervades the entire neighborhood, from the Hudson River through Central Park. Helicopter noise can also be felt, causing a visceral queasiness in many people. The bottom line is that to withstand noise is extremely stressful. Ultimately, bearing a continuous level of such stress damages people's health.

The helicopters also poison the air we breathe. Helicopters are among the worst polluters of all gasoline engines. They spew hundreds of tons of toxic pollutants into our air every day. People can't smoke in Central Park, but helicopters spew their poisonous exhaust and fumes everywhere.

The helicopter companies have also shown themselves to be reckless about the safety of their passengers, not to mention the safety of the millions of people on the ground in our teeming city. We have been lucky so far that none of them has fallen onto a building or onto a street full of people. Falling into the rivers is horrific enough. In addition, their security screening of passengers is cursory, at best.

Furthermore, tour helicopters are not necessary. Police and hospital helicopters are necessary. But not in any way do tour helicopters contribute to the maintenance of the city and the well-being of the people here. And no amount of money can justify the harm they are causing.

We who live here, work here, and raise our families here: we are the heart of the city. We pay substantial taxes to be here. It took me decades of effort to be able to live and work on the upper west side. I chose my small apartment expressly because it was in a quiet, residential neighborhood. Well, that precious quiet is being shattered by tour helicopters.

The mayor says he wants to keep New York livable, and to make it a green city. But this situation is not livable. And it is not "green." With their ceaseless, overbearing racket, these helicopters shatter the peace of our neighborhoods. With their toxic emissions, they poison the air we breathe. With their casual approach to safety, they are a constant danger. Their presence is an assault on our well-being. It must stop.

We are your constituents. We need for you, our elected representatives, to stand up for us. These helicopters are bringing us nothing but grief. Please: get rid of them. Ban them.

Sincerely,

**FOR THE RECORD**



for the Helicopter Tourist Companies,

4) Why doesn't the Economic Dev Corp represent tax paying New Yorkers' interests?

Kim Rasmussen

290 Riverside Dr

NY NY 10825

kimrasmus@yahoo.it

Thank you Brad Lander for your questions to the EDC and your understanding of the impact on the misery levels, the environmental pollution. "For the modest economic benefit, it's

FOR THE RECORD

FOR THE RECORD

just not worth it. "Thank you!!!"

FOR THE RECORD

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justine Johnson  
Alexander Brady

Address: 110 William

I represent: WICEDC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justine Johnson

Address: 110 William

I represent: WICEDC

Address: 110 William

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 11/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Hopkins

Address: 110 William

I represent: WICEDC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 178

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/18/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: WARREN SCAREIDER

Address: 13-24 BELL BLVD, BOYSBORO, NY 11360

I represent: NY COMMUNITY ORIENTATION FODNATION

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/16/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GEORGE MITSOPoulos

Address: 146-17 95th AVE, WHITESTONE, NY 11357

I represent: WE LOVE WHITESTONE CIVIC ASSOC -

Address: P.O. Box 29, WHITESTONE, NY 11357

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0178-2018

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4-18-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MIKE GANPOP

Address: 132 - Park Lane Douglass, NY

I represent: Douglas Manor Association

Address: 234-216 41st Ave, Douglass NY 11363

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lana Tound

Address: 70 Battery Place

I represent: community

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 2015 3470 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/18/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SAM GOLDSFEIN

Address: 237 W 35th St

I represent: HELICOPTER TOURISM & TOURS COUNCIL

Address: DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN HELIPOINT

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jon Gralnick

Address: 333 West 4th Place NY NY 10250

I represent: Self-Resident

Address: See Above

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/18/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph SWARTZ

Address: 200 RECTOR PLACE 20.D

I represent: RESIDENTS of LOWER MANHATTAN

Address: NY NY 10280

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marie Timell

Address: 28 West 88th St

I represent: West 88th St Black Assoc.

Address: + Self

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justin J. Connor

Address: 1838 2nd Ave #119, N.Y.C.

I represent: Congressman Thomas R. Suozzi

Address: 478 A Park Ave, Huntington, N.Y.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Helicopters Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Dellaportor

Address: 377 Becto Place

I represent: Stop the CHP

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL RYCHECK

Address: 112 WILLOW ST SB BROOKLYN NY 11209

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: April 18, 2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cheré Campbell

Address: 320 West 89 St, NYC 10024

I represent: to ban your helicopters

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: STACEY SHUB

Address: 1001 Beekman St 7M

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms*

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: JEFFREY MOSKIN

Address: 565 WEST END AVE

I represent: Riverside Park Caserum

Address: N/A

*Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms*