

## **Proposed Community Input System February 14, 2011**

### **Background**

Helicopters are deployed by the military, governments and public agencies, and the private sector to conduct vital missions supporting national security and public safety in the National Capital Region (NCR) on a 24/7 basis. Regulation and management of helicopter routes is the responsibility of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Citizens, while recognizing the essential nature of helicopter flights in the NCR, also have raised significant concerns regarding the impact of helicopters on the quality of life in communities scattered throughout the region. These issues were recently the subject of discussion at a Helicopter Forum convened by COG, with support from the FAA, on September 22, 2010. Additional dialogue continued in a special briefing for local elected officials presented by FAA held at COG on November 30, 2010. Another Helicopter Forum is scheduled for February 23, 2011 where consideration of a community input system will be part of the meeting agenda.

Currently, there is no formal program or system that compiles and assesses helicopter noise complaints in the NCR; only anecdotal reports are available that document community disturbance due to helicopter overflights. The lack of a formal system limits the ability of the FAA and local elected officials to consider possible mitigation actions, or identify which communities are most significantly affected. Creation of such a system would greatly facilitate dialogue and education of citizens and provide the FAA and local elected officials with an important tool for addressing complaints.

### **Community Input System Design Criteria**

To address the issues noted above, it is proposed that a "community input system" for helicopter noise complaints be created. The design of such a system would be guided using the following criteria:

- On-line, internet based portal
- Background educational information on helicopter types, ownership, noise signatures, general background on the route and zone system, FAA responsibilities for route regulation
- System designed to only accept complaints from individuals with a valid, recognizable address in the NCR
- No response to individual complaints other than a notice of receipt
- Complaints would be aggregated into a regional database
- Software would have analytical capability to define and depict "hotspots"
- On a periodic basis community meetings would be convened by local elected officials with support from the FAA to assess hotspot data and discuss the potential for mitigation actions.