



CITY HALL
HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

December 19, 2022

Charles Sams, III.
Director, National Parks Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Billy Nolen
Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Director Sams and FAA Administrator Nolan,

We write to convey our opposition to the “Commercial Air Tour Voluntary Agreement for Statue of Liberty National Monument and Governors Island National Monument,” which would negatively impact Hoboken residents who cherish our waterfront parks and who regularly visit Liberty State Park.

The agreement focuses heavily on limiting noise from aircraft, which can “impact visitor experience negatively” at Liberty Island and ruin the parts of Governors Island where people can “enjoy fewer man-made sounds compared to the highly urban environments surrounding the island.” We appreciate that the National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) acknowledge the detrimental effects of helicopter noise and the negative impacts that helicopters have on visitors to our National Parks as well as their negative impacts on human health and well-being.

What is inexplicable is that the NPS and FAA have failed to consider the negative impacts this agreement creates beyond the buffer area of the National Parks by shifting the negative impacts of non-essential helicopter traffic to the residents of Hudson County and the visitors to Liberty State Park, including the Hoboken residents we represent.

Because of the likely harm this agreement will cause to our community, we ask that NPS and FAA go back to the drawing board and solicit meaningful input from all stakeholders affected, including federal, state and local leaders, local parks advocates like the Friends of Liberty State Park, and local grassroots environmental activists like Stop the Chop NY/NJ, organizations that have been disregarded to date.

Furthermore, we request that NPS and FAA conduct a study to determine how the proposed agreement, and its resulting increase in helicopter flights forced to different flight paths, will impact residents of Hudson County as well as visitors to Liberty State Park. It is essential that NPS and FAA not only consider the experiences of visitors to Statue of Liberty Island, Ellis Island, and Governors Island but also the residents who neighbor the parks and who live in some of the most densely populated communities in America. Our local parks are our urban oases. Our parks provide the peace, tranquility, and public spaces that are priceless to our constituents' physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

We in Hoboken have seen the impact of redirected flight paths over our community. Non-essential helicopter flights coming in low over our community have caused significant disruption to Hoboken residents' lives and adversely impacted the quiet enjoyment of our homes, gardens, and local parks. Below is a representative complaint we received this month:

"I realize there's always been heavy helicopter traffic over the Hudson river proper, but this is new.

About 3 months ago, helicopter traffic started coming directly over Hoboken, west to east and back again, at low altitudes (under 1000 feet, sometimes significantly). It was so sudden and noticeable, we thought it was just rerouting because the UN was in session that week. This was 6-10 flights an hour at times, directly over central Hoboken (and therefore Jersey City/Union City further west, too).

However, it continued after the General Assembly ended. I'm not sure if they are commuters or tourists, but this route and its noise is definitely a new thing. I've lived here 15 years. *This shakes windows and wakes up babies.*"

On behalf of Hoboken residents who cherish our waterfront parks, including Liberty State Park, we express our strong opposition to the NPS/FAA draft agreement. We urge a new, transparent process to occur before finalizing any agreement with representatives of the private helicopter industry. Any proposed NPS/FAA agreement must ensure that it does not create any additional adverse impacts on the residents of Hudson County, including Hoboken, New Jersey, or the visitors to Liberty State Park.

Ravi S. Bhalla



Mayor of Hoboken

Phil Cohen



Hoboken City Councilman