



May 15, 2025

To:

The Honorable Sean Duffy, Secretary of Transportation  
Administrator Chris Rocheleau, Federal Aviation Administration

Dear Secretary Duffy and Administrator Rocheleau,

We are a coalition of deeply concerned residents of Hudson County, NJ, and New York City, writing on behalf of hundreds of thousands who are calling for your leadership. Every day, nonessential helicopters — particularly sightseeing and commuter flights — fly low over our neighborhoods, often just hundreds of feet above homes, schools, parks, and hospitals. The approximately 80,000 nonessential helicopter flights annually in this tightly confined space often pass just minutes apart, weaving beneath commercial jets in one of the most congested and overstressed airspace systems in the country. In the wake of the fatal crash right here on April 10th, and amid mounting air traffic control staffing shortages, system strain, and communication breakdowns at facilities like Newark Liberty, it is now unmistakably clear that these flights are not just a nuisance — they are a growing threat to public safety. We are calling on you to prevent the next tragedy and put an end to these nonessential flights over our communities.

The NYC metro area has long been a helicopter hotspot, and the April 10<sup>th</sup> crash tragically confirmed a fear that many of us have harbored for years. The very sightseeing helicopter that plunged into the Hudson River — killing all six on board, including a young family and the pilot — had previously taken thousands of flights over homes, schools, and places of business in New York City and northern New Jersey, including three passes over densely populated Jersey City and Hoboken that same day. That helicopter could just as easily have crashed into our neighborhood. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident: sightseeing and commuter helicopters have crashed nine times in the New York City area in the past 20 years, and each time the FAA has failed to act to prevent the next tragedy. With the sheer volume of these flights, the low altitudes at which they operate, and their presence in a region already grappling with air traffic control staffing shortages, overtime fatigue, and recent communication outages, the risks are multiplying. On January 29 in Washington, DC, we saw the horrific consequences of unnecessary congestion. That tragedy occurred in airspace that is much less crowded and much more heavily restricted than that of the New York metro area. Yet despite this heightened risk, nonessential helicopters continue to operate here with virtually no oversight. In this environment, we fear it's only a matter of time before the unthinkable occurs again, this time over a park, a school, or a backyard.

We want to be clear: we support and respect the vital role of helicopters in medical, law enforcement, military, and emergency operations. We are not calling for any changes to flight paths or rules governing essential aircraft. But we are urging you at the Department of Transportation and the FAA to ban nonessential sightseeing and commuter helicopter flights over and alongside residential areas in

our densely populated metropolis. These flights provide no public benefit, operate dangerously close to homes and infrastructure, and endanger the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of residents.

For those of us who experience this daily assault, it's clear that the current situation is untenable and in urgent need of change. The City Councils of Jersey City, Hoboken, and New York City have overwhelmingly voted in support of banning or limiting nonessential helicopters from travelling over densely populated areas. And on May 5th, Representatives Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Rob Menendez (D-NJ), and Jerry Nadler (D-NY) introduced bipartisan federal legislation – a rarity in this political climate – in an effort to ameliorate this situation for their concerned and frustrated constituents. We wholeheartedly support the Improving Helicopter Safety Act, which calls for a ban on nonessential helicopter traffic within a 20-mile radius of the Statue of Liberty, and we urge you at the Department of Transportation and the FAA to publicly do so or, better yet, take immediate steps to implement its intent through emergency rulemaking or revised flight restrictions. For years, thousands of us here in New York and New Jersey have submitted noise complaints, reported helicopters flying at unsafe altitudes, contacted FAA regional offices, and appealed to elected officials, all with no relief. We are imploring you to hear us now and take action to restore safety and sanity to our skies.

We recognize that managing national airspace is complex. But it is unconscionable that thrill-seeking tourists and private charter passengers should be allowed to fly repeatedly over residential neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, and parks at the expense of the safety and quality of life of the people who live below. We need the support of the FAA and DOT to prioritize the lives of millions of residents over a relatively small number of helicopter companies and their profits.

We urge you, Secretary Duffy and Administrator Rocheleau, to act in the public interest and prevent the next tragedy from occurring by grounding these nonessential flights. Millions of us here in the NYC metro area are counting on you.

Sincerely,

**Stop the Chop NY/NJ - [www.stopthechopnynj.org](http://www.stopthechopnynj.org)**  
**Safe Skies Coalition – Hudson County**

cc: Congressman Jerry Nadler  
Congressman Robert Menendez  
Congressman Nicole Malliotakis  
Congressman Grace Meng  
Congressman Nydia Velazquez  
Congressman LaMonica McIver  
Senator Chuck Schumer  
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand  
Senator Cory Booker  
Senator Andy Kim