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HAI's Innovative Pilot Program Yields Successful Results: Congressman Beyer Hosts FAA Announcement of Plans to Alter Helicopter Routes in D.C.–Virginia Area

Alexandria, Va. (April 25, 2022) – Following a six-month study of rotorcraft sound in the greater Washington, D.C., area, Congressman Don Beyer (Va.-8) today joined the FAA in announcing plans to modify helicopter routes in the District of Columbia and parts of Northern Virginia. The FAA based these route modifications on data collected from a six-month pilot program launched by Helicopter Association International (HAI) and the Eastern Region Helicopter Council (ERHC) in partnership with PlaneNoise, an aviation noise consultancy.

The pilot program was initiated in response to recommendations from a 2021 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which Rep. Beyer and other federal lawmakers representing the Washington metropolitan area had requested. The program collected sophisticated flight-tracking data and correlated it with helicopter sound complaints, identifying opportunities for altitudinal and zone changes.

At an event at the Fairlington Community Center in Arlington, Va., representatives of four municipal governments in Northern Virginia—Tom Arnold of Fairfax County, Libby Garvey of Arlington County, Justin Wilson of Alexandria City, and Dave Tarter of Falls Church City—announced their decision to fund a one-year extension to continue the data collection and analysis.

“Since I took office over eight years ago, helicopter noise has been a constant source of complaints from constituents across Northern Virginia. Here in the nation’s capital with military, medical, commercial and other aviation, aircraft noise will always be with us – but there are things we can do to help reduce that impact,” said Congressman Don Beyer. “The actions we announced today with partners at the federal and local level and our friends at HAI include FAA changes to helicopter flight paths and regional jurisdiction funding to continue the valuable complaint tracking system which helped inform those changes. These actions are a direct response to community input, and I thank the many people whose efforts helped inform the

actions we are announcing today, as well as our partners across levels of government who are acting to reduce helicopter noise in Northern Virginia.”

In a statement at the event, Jeff Smith, chair of the HAI Board of Directors, praised the leaders of the four municipal governments for their commitment to continuing the program, stating, “Your involvement is critical to the process, and we look forward to working with you to address issues in the National Capital Region.”

Smith also expressed his appreciation to Rep. Beyer and the FAA for their collaboration with the helicopter operator community, saying, “Thanks to Congressman Beyer’s leadership and the FAA’s initiative to bring together the operator community, the study provided opportunities to adjust routes that the FAA identified, evaluated, and will soon implement.”

Smith noted that the HAI Fly Neighborly Program has promoted better relationships between communities and helicopter operators since 1982 by providing techniques for sound mitigation and effective communication between stakeholders. “Best practices from this program, along with the data collected from this new initiative, can and will make a noticeable difference in this community,” said Smith.

Smith also highlighted the importance of data-driven solutions and collaboration among multiple government stakeholders, including the Department of Defense, in achieving this success. “This pilot program is a perfect case study for how government and industry can work together to address issues and deliver tangible results,” he said.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the global helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective business tool that provides unique advantages to society and to the advancement of the international vertical aviation community.