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## Lawmakers blast FAA flight plan

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November 4, 2007

NEW CANAAN - Opponents of the plan to move air traffic over Fairfield County spoke yesterday about alternatives, like directing the planes over Long Island Sound and promoting train travel.

State representatives from Fairfield County and U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Bridgeport, spoke against the Federal Aviation Administration at a rally held by the New Canaan Environmental Group in the Outback Teen Center behind Town Hall.

Speakers accused the FAA of neglecting the environment and area residents.

"The FAA is totally oblivious to quality-of-life issues, and we as a community are going to have to figure out what we want," Shays said.

State Rep. Antonietta "Toni" Boucher, R-Wilton, called for an increase of mass transit and promoted rail travel, which would decrease dependency on air travel for longer trips, she said.

"The skies have started to emulate what has happened to the roads, especially in Connecticut," she said.

The rally came two days after Gov. M. Jodi Rell and state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal announced that Connecticut has filed suit against the FAA, the first state to do so. Eleven towns also have filed suit.

Kurt Strasser, a University of Connecticut Law School professor said earlier this week that the state must prove the FAA ignored environmental effects on Fairfield County or that the agency came to its conclusions "arbitrarily and capriciously."

Yesterday's speakers discussed several alternatives to having increased traffic over Fairfield County.

Shays suggested moving some air traffic over Long Island Sound.

"That's a key element," he said. "And to have some of the traffic be during non-peak times."

The FAA's plan, approved in September, aims to cut delays at airports by 20 percent. Opponents to the



plan, including Rell, Blumenthal and those at yesterday's rally, routinely cite the increase in noise pollution as an argument against the plan, which would reroute arrivals at LaGuardia Airport over Fairfield County instead of Westchester County, N.Y.

A city of Stamford study reported that the increase in air traffic would increase noise, on average, up to 38 to 40 decibels, from about 32. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association reports on its Web site that 40 decibels is about the same noise as a "quiet room."

State Rep. William Tong, D-Stamford, called for audience members to take action against the flight patterns by mailing letters to the FAA.

Heather Wolf, manager of Web site [www.OurAirspace.org](http://www.OurAirspace.org), said the revamped air traffic patterns also compromise safety.

"You are introducing a higher level of collision risk when you introduce more airplanes flying closer together," she said.

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