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Omnibus Spending Bill Signed into Law including noise mitigation provisions

December 18 - On Friday morning the House and Senate gave final approval to an omnibus spending bill (highlights below) to fund the federal government through the end of Fiscal Year 2016. Friday afternoon the President signed the measure into law. Following the Omnibus votes Congress adjourned for the holidays and will return to Washington in early January.

U.S. Department of Transportation

The bill includes \$16.3 billion in total budget authority for the Federal Aviation Administration – \$563 million above the 2015 enacted level and \$445 million above the President’s request. Many airport priorities would receive level or only slightly increased funding from last year.

The bill also includes language directing the FAA to take a more proactive role in engaging communities impacted by noise due to new departure and arrival procedures, especially when the agency chooses to utilize a categorical exclusion as part of the environmental review process. Rather than addressing issues in particular communities, the bill requires FAA to update its community involvement manual and implementation plan.

Noise Mitigation: *The explanatory statement on the omnibus notes that "The FAA must take a more proactive role in engaging communities that are impacted by these new departure and arrival procedures, especially when the agency chooses to utilize a categorical exclusion as part of the environmental review process. The agreement does not include provisions related to specific communities, but rather includes broad language requiring FAA to update its community involvement manual and implementation plan. Improved community outreach is one part of the solution. Investments in new technologies that will reduce noise and other environmental impacts caused by aircraft are equally important. In that regard, the agreement continues to include robust funding for the Continuous Lower Energy, Emissions and Noise (CLEEN) program."*

At this point, we do not know what the specific impacts or follow-up action may be regarding the Sky Harbor flight path changes. We shall be in close contact with representatives at Sky Harbor as well as FAA. As soon as we have new information, we shall share that with you.