

NIKI TSONGAS  
5TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

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**Congress of the United States**  
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July 24, 2009

Secretary Ray LaHood  
Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I would like to ask for your assistance with an issue of importance to the Minute Man National Historical Park and the constituents of my district. The expansion of a local airport, Hanscom Field, threatens the sanctity of the park, and I am greatly concerned that the Federal Aviation Administration has not taken the appropriate steps to fully evaluate the impact that increased noise pollution, caused by greater air traffic, will have on the authenticity of this national treasure. I would appreciate any assistance that you can provide to ensure that Minute Man National Historical Park is not adversely impacted by increased utilization of Hanscom Field.

Hanscom Field is a regional airport operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort) serving private aircraft in the Boston metro area. It is the only airport in the country that abuts both a national park, Minute Man National Historical Park, and a national wildlife refuge, the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The airport is also home to historic Hangar 24, which is currently listed in the Massachusetts Inventory of Historic Assets and is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

MassPort is pursuing options to expand utilization of Hanscom Field through the demolition and replacement of Hangar 24 and the location of a new hangar(s) elsewhere on the airport. Significant opposition exists within the local community to both demolishing Hangar 24 and expanding air traffic at Hanscom. The community has significant concerns with the negative impact expansion of Hanscom would have on the national park. In public comment to the FAA, the superintendent of Minute Man National Historical Park expressed these concerns:

"This is 'sacred ground' where Patriots stood up to British Regulars and started the war which created our nation. Further airport expansion would result in an increase of air traffic noise over the Park and ground traffic along the historic Battle Road. In part due to MassPort's activities at Hanscom, the park has already been designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the "Eleven Most Endangered Places" in the U.S.A. The stated purpose of creating more hangar space may well mean additional adverse effects to the Park's historical resources and the ability of Park visitors to enjoy their experience. Minute Man National Historical Park is one of the Commonwealth's top tourist destinations and people visit here from around the nation and the world."

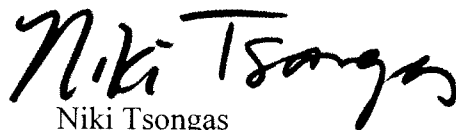
As required by law, the FAA conducted an environmental assessment of Massport's intended plan. The draft environmental assessment states that there would be no "significant" impact on the surrounding area; however, FAA failed to consider the unique and essential fact that Hanscom Field abuts both Minute Man National Historical Park and Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. According to information provided by the National Park Service, the environmental assessment failed to follow FAA Order 1050.1E, which requires special assessment of noise impacts on unique properties such as national parks and national wildlife refuges. Despite its assessment of no significant impact, it is clear that the FAA has not considered the unique requirements of the national park in its evaluation of noise pollution.

The Minute Man National Historical Park preserves for future generations the events that produced the founding of our country. Visitors expect to experience the sights, sounds and spirit of the American Revolution. Preserving the soundscapes of the Park is critical to achieving this goal. Minute Man National Historical Park is already threatened by heavy air traffic, unchecked noise and visual intrusions from Hanscom Field. Expansion of Hanscom Field will do further harm to this national park where the American Revolution began.

Given the threat to the national park and wildlife refuge, the opposition from the local community, and the insufficient analysis done by the FAA, I ask that you investigate this matter to ensure that the sanctity of Minute Man National Park is protected.

I appreciate your assistance with this matter. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kate Lynch in my Washington, DC office. I look forward to working with you on this issue, which is so important to my constituents and to preserving our national heritage for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Niki Tsongas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress