

5.3 SOCIAL IMPACTS

Social impacts are assessed to determine the effect that the Proposed Action would have on the social fabric of the surrounding communities. The types of social impacts that typically arise from airport actions are:

- Relocation of residences, farms, and businesses,
- Division or disruption of established communities,
- Disruption of planned development, and
- Changes in surface traffic patterns that may temporarily restrict community access.

This section examines whether or not the Proposed Action would disrupt established communities. A discussion of environmental justice is also provided. All of the proposed alternatives would not impact the other categories because they involve only air traffic actions.

5.3.1 Division or Disruption of Established Communities

There would be no disruption of established communities as a result of implementing Alternative 2 or the Proposed Action. Both alternatives involve the implementation of the air traffic actions for noise abatement as well as the SWAP route in the Proposed Action. Those actions are described in Chapter Three, *Alternatives*. A review of the components of the Proposed Action finds that there are no measures that would relocate homes, alter traffic patterns, disrupt planned development, or relocate residences, farms, or businesses. The Proposed Action in this EIS does shift the noise contours at the 65 DNL level and brings in four new homes into the impact area. Those homes are eligible for mitigation being offered under the NCP Update. Section 5.1, *Noise*, has an exhibit showing these changes and Section 5.2, *Land Use*, discusses the additional impacted homes.

It should be noted that the NCP Update for T.F. Green contains an acquisition measure for homes in the 70 DNL noise contours and higher. The acquisition area is a direct result of the normal operation of the airport not the Proposed Action in this EIS. The impacts resulting from the Proposed Action are to be mitigated through the sound insulation measures from the approved NCP. Those impacts only occur along the boundary of the 65 DNL contour. There are some areas that are not within the 65+ DNL noise contours, but may be offered mitigation to prevent the division of neighborhoods. As stated elsewhere in this document, the communities around the airport are well established and have been there for over 30 years.

Furthermore, the voluntary acquisition is not specifically assessed as part of this EIS since its implementation is not dependent on a Record of Decision regarding the Proposed Action. The voluntary acquisition program is subject to Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act and property owners are eligible for relocation assistance.

5.3.2 Environmental Justice

On February 11, 1994, the President of the United States signed Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations*. This Executive Order requires all Federal agencies to identify and address disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on

minority and low-income populations. The order also directs Federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of their overall mission by conducting their programs and activities in a manner that provides minority and low-income populations an opportunity to participate in agency programs and activities. Department of Transportation Order 5610.2, *Environmental Justice in Minority Population and Low-Income Populations*, is also a source utilized to determine the environmental justice effects of implementing an alternative at an airport.

The Executive Order relates to requirements in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act (49 CFR Part 24), and other applicable statutes and regulations. Title VI provides that no person will, on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, disability, or family composition, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program of the Federal, state, or local government. Title VIII of the 1968 Civil Rights Act guarantees each person equal opportunity in housing.

Analysis of Minority Populations

The U.S. Department of Transportation and the White House Office of Environmental Justice define minority as “individuals who are Black/African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, or other non-white persons.” The Office of Environmental Justice indicates that for populations to be considered as minority, the minority composition should either exceed 50 percent, or be greater than the minority population percentage in the general population of the geographic area under analysis. The appropriate unit of geographic analysis may be a governing body’s jurisdiction, a neighborhood, a census tract, or other similar unit.

The 1990 Bureau of Census data used for this study, is the most current source available that contains information on minority compositions and population in communities near the T.F. Green Airport. The Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) updated this data in 1996, but not to the level of detail necessary to determine population percentages. Therefore, the 1990 Census data, while dated, is still the best source for this information.

The areas closest to the T.F. Green Airport which are subject to the majority of the aircraft noise and overflights from low altitude aircraft include the following communities: Lincoln Park; Norwood; Spring Green; Hoxie; Wildes Corner; Greenwood; Arnold Neck; and Hillsgrove.

An examination of the racial population percentages in these communities revealed that the minority compositions in the communities near the airport does not exceed 50 percent in any single community. The majority of these communities have populations that are 95 percent or greater Caucasian. This was determined using the Geographic Information System (GIS) developed for the area around T.F. Green Airport and based on the 1990 census data. The analysis found that as a result of implementing the Proposed Action in this EIS, no environmental justice issues were found to result to communities exposed to lower altitude flights near the airport. **Table 5.3-1** shows the racial mix of the communities evaluated. The areas listed are the primary neighborhoods of concern in the study area. Because the areas of increase are generally small and more reduction than increase of noise occurs with this alternative, it is assumed that the racial mix in those areas follows the pattern shown in Table 5.3-1. A special analysis of those areas was not deemed to be necessary.

Table 5.3-1
COMMUNITY RACIAL MIX
T.F. Green Airport

<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Minority</u>
Hoxie	99%	1%
Norwood	96%	4%
Spring Green	95%	5%
Wildes Corner	97%	3%
Hillsgrove	97%	3%
Lincoln Park	97%	3%

Source: Landrum & Brown, 2000

Because the Proposed Action includes refined aircraft corridors that will overfly some communities at greater distances from the airport, aircraft at higher altitudes were also examined. The primary communities which could experience overflights and noise from aircraft at higher altitudes (over 3,000 feet above ground level) include the following: Cranston; Goddard Memorial State Park; Gaspee Point; Rocky Point; Cowesett; Apponaug; Oakland Beach; Horse Neck; Kettle corner; Lockwood Corner; Coles; Conimicut; Palace Garden; Warwick Neck; Bayside; Highland Beach; Pontiac; East Natick; Chepiwanoxet; West Warwick; and East Greenwich. Because the Proposed Action does not have a direct noise affect on these communities located further away from the airport, no racial mix was determined for them.

The Air Traffic Noise Screening analysis (ATNS) discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 5.1.11 and also Appendix D) did not show additional impacts from higher altitude flights as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that no environmental justice impacts would result from implementing overflights of communities by aircraft at higher altitudes.

Analysis of Low-Income Populations

For this EIS, the poverty threshold, as established by the Bureau of the Census for 1990, has also been used as the low-income threshold. The poverty threshold for a one-person household is \$6,280, increasing by \$2,240 for each additional person. As such, a household containing four persons would be considered below the poverty level if their household income were less than \$13,000 in 1990.

The analysis of low-income populations indicated that there would not be any neighborhoods near the airport or in the 2003 65 DNL noise contours where the average household income is less than \$13,000 for a four-person household. This information is based on the 1990 census data used in the GIS database developed for the area. Therefore, the EIS analysis determined that no environmental justice impacts to lower income residences would occur in communities around T.F. Green Airport as a result of implementing the Proposed Action.