I am writing to offer my comments regarding reducing aviation pollution and noise, especially from helicopters, has NOT been made in my community.

As a resident of Manhattan’s Midtown East, I am overwhelmed by daily helicopter noise in my apartment, as well as in Central Park and in the Sutton Place pocket parks along the East River. Helicopters, at times I have counted up to 12 in the air, loop and hover over the afore-mentioned areas. The noise is intolerable. It disrupts my work-at-home, and my peace there, causing me to flee to either Central Park seeking tranquility where I continue to be subjected to the helicopter noise there. Considering the high State and local taxes we NYers pay, we should not be subjected to this. Nor should we as NYers subsidize and be part of New Jersey helicopter companies’ business plan! Exploitive and abusive helicopter tourism over NYC skies MUST STOP!

Aviation noise pollution caused by helicopters is a serious public health issue.

Studies have shown that repeated exposure to aviation noise pollution is a public health hazard. Aircraft noise pollution has negative health impacts on the cardiovascular system, including increased risk of strokes and heart attack. It also harms the endocrine and nervous systems, impairs cognition, and causes sleep disruption, anxiety, and depression.

I urge NYCAC to include the environmental and health impacts caused by NY's non-essential helicopter industry in the Draft Scoping Plan for the following reasons:

* Currently, there are close to 100,000 annual nonessential helicopter flights from three NYC heliports that offer sightseeing trips and commuter flights to NYC airports, the Hamptons, and beyond. Other NY heliports contributing to this wild west helicopter airspace over the NY metro area are based in East Hampton and Westchester. These fossil fuel guzzling helicopters dump tons of toxic helicopter emissions on all those below their flight paths or near the heliports. Shockingly, we actually have a heliport located within a State park and situated between the country's busiest bike and recreational path and the Hudson River: the West 30th Street Heliport is located within Manhattan's Hudson River Park. Bikers, joggers, pedestrians, rollerbladers and kayakers are sucking in this noxious jet fuel every time a helicopter lands and departs, and additionally when they refuel. This park, ironically, is actually contributing to climate change rather than reducing it.
* Each helicopter produces 950 pounds of CO2 per hour, and burns over 40x the fuel of a passenger car per hour. That qualifies them as one of the most polluting, carbon-intense modes of transport. Completely counter to any environmental goals, are the 30,000 helicopter sightseeing flights departing from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport as they do not even provide "transportation" but rather needless, polluting joyrides in the NY Harbor and up and down the Hudson River which has unfortunately become a helicopter highway.
* Some helicopters STILL burn leaded fuel which was banned by the EPA 25 years ago because of its proven detrimental impact on children’s brains and nervous systems. According to the FAA, leaded aviation fuel makes up “the largest remaining aggregate source of lead emissions to air in the U.S." Even non-lead fueled helicopters are a significant source of particulate air pollution. Small airborne particulates emitted by piston engine helicopters have long been known to impact respiratory and cardiovascular functions. Exposures increase the cumulative risk of chronic disease and death. See <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/are-helicopters-eco-friendly>
* The adverse impacts of air pollutants falls especially hard on people living in NYC’s Environmental Justice neighborhoods, many which are directly under the paths of commuter and tourist helicopters. These include Manhattan's Three Bridges, Brownsville in Brooklyn and Old Astoria in Queens. There are higher rates of childhood and adult asthma, even premature death due to environmental factors.
* Noise pollution is also an environmental public health threat, referred to as the new second hand smoke. A recent Robert Wood Johnson Medical School study found that heart attack rates were 72% higher in areas with a lot of transportation noise. Helicopters are uniquely loud with their low vibration roars that are created by rotating blades, and additionally due to their low altitude flights over our homes, neighborhoods, parks, and waterways, and the fact that the heliports are located in densely populated areas!
* Given NY is facing threats of even more climate change caused catastrophes, as we experienced during Hurricanes Sandy and Ida, every source of NY transportation pollution must be held to a new and urgent environmental standard. If NY is serious about decarbonization, the final NYCAC scoping plan must be focused on reliable, sustainable mass transport for all. It must include an immediate ban of carbon-intense nonessential helicopter transport. To continue allowing fossil-fuel based sightseeing and commuter flights is an injustice to all New Yorkers.

For all the above reasons, I urge meaningful action to address the serious health impacts of aviation noise pollution, especially nonessential (tourist/sightseeing/amateur photographer and commuter/charter) helicopters, on communities such as mine. As you know, the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 ("ANCA") stripped away most local control over aircraft and aviation noise. ANCA needs to be amended to return control over aviation-related noise pollution to local governments and to integrate community concerns into the FAA decision-making process in a meaningful way.

I thank you for this opportunity to offer my comments via email.

Respectfully submitted,

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