

FAA response regarding the Motion for ACR consideration

The ACR submitted a document titled “Motion for ACR consideration” to the Piedmont District Manager in which they requested the FAA validate an analysis of a 2013-2017 LGA-CLT arrivals.

The Piedmont District Manager’s staff conducted a review of the information provided. The response is in italics below.

From the Motion for ACR consideration:

Based on analysis of a 2013-2017 LGA - CLT arrivals sample set, the ACR is requesting a formal response from the FAA as to whether:

1) the sample data is valid

Yes, the sample data is valid.

2) the sample data is indicative of lower altitudes for all arrivals post NextGen implementation, or just downwind, north flow arrivals traversing South Charlotte

The data provided was specific to an address and indicated that over that geographical location aircraft were lower than they were prior to 2015. Typically, this occurred when aircraft were on a downwind during a North flow operation. Validation of aircraft overflying a specific geographical location is not confirmation that aircraft are flying at lower altitudes in general. Aircraft overflying this address were in a descent profile. Prior to 2015, aircraft would have passed through similar altitudes in their descent although over a different geographic point.

3) the data supports reduced altitudes per this arrival rail as being critical to air traffic safety

The purpose of the design was to increase efficiency without the degradation of safety. The term “reduced altitudes” may have different meanings. This should not be construed as implying that overall in the CLT approach airspace aircraft are operating at lower altitudes for longer periods than they were pre-2015. It is possible that aircraft are lower at a specific geographical location, but the statement that aircraft are lower in general would be inaccurate. The procedures and profiles that aircraft fly allow the aircraft to descend based on the aircraft performance characteristics in a continuous fashion which could have a different altitude profile than prior to the implementation of NextGen at CLT. There are areas within the CLT airspace in which the aircraft altitudes are higher than they were prior to 2015. In a complex design the procedures and profiles must be established and evaluated on the merit of the entire operation and not on one specific geographical location.

4) reduced altitudes are necessary due to post NextGen related departure changes and, if so, what those departure changes are

The purpose of an Optimized Profile Descent for aircraft is to increase efficiency by allowing the aircraft to descend in a continuous manner, (which is based on individual aircraft performance characteristics.) OPDs are used in an effort to reduce periods of level flight which increases aircraft fuel efficiency. These procedures often start hundreds of miles from the airport they are designed for. NextGen procedures did not create “reduced altitudes”. Any altitude modifications were done to meet NextGen goals and to ensure Separation Standards. There are

no “reduced altitudes” as a result of NextGen procedures. Arrival aircraft descend from high altitudes to the landing surface. One of the goals of OPDs and NextGen is to reduce periods of level flight at all altitudes.

5) consideration of a return to pre NextGen implementation altitudes is feasible without a lengthy and complicated Environmental Assessment process

Pre NextGen procedures would require the same environment process as any newly developed procedure.