



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., SW.
Washington, DC 20591

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

House Report 115-750, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2019 (P.L. 116-6), asks the Federal Aviation Administration to provide a progress report that identifies short- and long-term mitigation measures to address local concerns that resulted from the O'Hare Modernization Program at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. Please see the enclosed 2019 O'Hare Progress Report, which addresses that request.

We have sent identical letters to Chairwoman Lowey, Senator Leahy, and Congresswoman Granger.

Sincerely,

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

Steve Dickson
Administrator

Enclosure



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Washington, DC 20591

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

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April 1, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chair:

House Report 115-750, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2019 (P.L. 116-6), asks the Federal Aviation Administration to provide a progress report that identifies short- and long-term mitigation measures to address local concerns that resulted from the O'Hare Modernization Program at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. Please see the enclosed 2019 O'Hare Progress Report, which addresses that request.

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April 1, 2020

The Honorable Kay Granger
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Granger:

House Report 115-750, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2019 (P.L. 116-6), asks the Federal Aviation Administration to provide a progress report that identifies short- and long-term mitigation measures to address local concerns that resulted from the O'Hare Modernization Program at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. Please see the enclosed 2019 O'Hare Progress Report, which addresses that request.

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Report to Congress

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Chicago O'Hare Progress Report

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Washington, DC 20591

April 2019

**Report of the
Federal Aviation Administration
to the United States Congress
Pursuant to House Report 115-750
accompanying Public Law 116-6**

Requirement

House Report 115-750 (p. 16) provides, in relevant part:

The Committee directs the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to continue to work expeditiously to identify short and long term mitigation measures to address local concerns that have been raised as a result of the O'Hare Modernization Program at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, and to provide a progress report on these measures to the Committee within 90 days of enactment.

Chicago O'Hare Modernization Program Background, Status, and Local Concerns

The modernization of Chicago O'Hare International Airport is needed to meet Chicago's short- and long-term aviation demands in a manner that provides the greatest degree of safety and efficiency for the airport and the public. With each new O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) project completion, the operating configuration of the airfield changes and different communities are impacted. Over the past several years, community and political interest in these changes has increased significantly. Following the completion of Runway 10C/28C in October 2013, along with associated airspace changes, noise complaints increased significantly.¹ In October 2015, Runway 10R/28L was commissioned into service. The FAA, in support of this commissioning, conducted a variety of public workshops and dialogs.

The airport sponsor, the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA), decommissioned diagonal Runway 15/33 in March 2018. Funding is in place and the last new OMP runway (9C/27C) is under construction. The CDA plans to commission this new runway in November 2020. The FAA has been working with the CDA to ensure FAA facilities, associated infrastructure, and flight procedures required to complete the new runway are accomplished in a timely manner. The last OMP airfield runway project, an extension of existing Runway 9R/27L, is planned for completion in late 2021.

In its analysis of the OMP, the FAA, as a condition of project approval, carefully reviewed the potential environmental impacts to ensure that all appropriate mitigation alternatives were considered and reasonable steps taken to mitigate significant impacts. While we acknowledge impacts, such as noise, cannot be completely eliminated, the FAA has provided significant Federal funding to support robust residential and school sound insulation to minimize noise impacts.

The FAA Great Lakes Region Special Projects Office provides oversight and integration of FAA's role associated with the OMP. The office was established in 2002 when the CDA moved

¹ Reference Airport Noise Management System (ANMS) monthly reports posted at CDA's website <http://www.flychicago.com/community/ordnoise/pages/default.aspx>

forward with its plan for O'Hare modernization. The Great Lakes Regional Administrator has executive oversight of the OMP for FAA.

Short-Term Mitigation Measures

Short-term mitigation measures that the FAA is undertaking to address local concerns related to the OMP include providing technical explanations, supporting outreach, and remaining responsive to questions from stakeholders, including elected officials and the general public. Some specific examples of these activities include:

I. Support of the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission

The FAA continuously works in close collaboration with the CDA and the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) to share ideas, help to solve problems, and address the needs of the O'Hare community. This collaboration will continue and FAA will consider any proposed operational changes that CDA wishes to explore, consistent with our roles and responsibilities under Federal Aviation Noise Abatement Policy. Examples of ONCC Committee participation include:

- The Great Lakes Deputy and Regional Administrator regularly attend ONCC full commission and subcommittee meetings, and engage in conversation with elected officials and staff after the meetings. The FAA's Chicago Airports District Office staff has attended nearly every ONCC meeting since 2003; and
- While not related to OMP, the FAA has supported an ONCC Fly Quiet Committee since October 2015. As the committee worked to develop, recommend, and implement multiple rounds of Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan testing scenarios, FAA staff and management have attended meetings, answered questions, and provided technical and regulatory information as requested. Fly Quiet is the overnight noise abatement plan for O'Hare operations. The ONCC is currently developing a proposal for a future Fly Quiet Plan, after the completion of OMP, which may include runway rotation. The FAA is actively engaged with the ONCC and CDA on this process.

Interim Fly Quiet Nighttime Runway Rotation Testing

- In January 2016, the CDA and ONCC introduced an initiative to explore alternative uses of O'Hare runways during nighttime hours to spread out nighttime noise impacts on surrounding communities. This initiative is in response to concerns expressed by community representatives and some elected officials. The proposal triggered an FAA National Environmental Policy Act review of the plan. The FAA, including the Airports Division, Air Traffic, and the Great Lakes Regional Administrator's office, was actively engaged in supporting the CDA and the ONCC in developing this proposal. The FAA's support throughout the process included not only technical support to CDA, but ongoing dialog with elected officials to explain and provide status of the process from the FAA's perspective. In 2016 and 2017, the CDA completed

three tests of a nighttime runway rotation plan using different runways to spread out community noise exposure. The tests reflected stakeholder input from the CDA and the surrounding communities.

- In December 2017, the ONCC voted to request that the Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan, “Test 3,” be implemented.
- In February 2018, the CDA submitted its Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan to the FAA for review and analysis.
- The FAA prepared a draft written re-evaluation of the O’Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement to analyze and disclose the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan. In January 2019, the FAA released the draft written re-evaluation of the O’Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement and initiated a 45-day public comment period that ended in February 2019. The FAA held four public workshops in the communities surrounding O’Hare to give residents the opportunity to learn more about the potential impacts of the Proposed Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan.
- The FAA reviewed the comments submitted on the re-evaluation. The FAA issued a final written re-evaluation for the Proposed Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan, including responses to comments, in July 2019.
- The plan began in November 2019 for a non-consecutive eleven-month period through January 2021. The Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan is planned around runway rehabilitation and construction in 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- The Purpose of the Proposed Interim Fly Quiet is to implement a balanced, cost-effective plan to reduce the impact of aircraft noise over noise sensitive land uses. ONCC’s and the CDA’s general goals and objectives are to:
 - Provide near-term noise exposure relief.
 - Reduce impacts and provide noise relief to the highest impacted communities.
 - Provide predictability via a published rotation schedule that informs citizens, to the extent possible, or relief periods.²

II. Responsive to Stakeholders

² FAA (July 2019). Proposed Interim Fly Quiet. In *Written Re-Evaluation of the O’Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement for the Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan* (Section 2.2.2). Retrieved from https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/ifq_re_eval/media/ifq_re_eval_final_chapter_2.pdf

Correspondence: The FAA responds to written correspondence from stakeholders, including elected officials, the public, and others. Incoming and outgoing correspondence related to OMP is available to the public dating back to 2008 on the FAA website at:

https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/FAQ/.

The FAA also meets with Federal, State, local elected officials, and local interest groups. Some examples of these meetings that took place in FY 2019 include:

- The FAA hosted public workshops for the draft Re-Evaluation of the O'Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement for the Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan. The Great Lakes Deputy and Regional Administrator, leadership and staff from the Office of Airports, the Office of Communications, and Air Traffic Mission Support also participated in the workshops. The Regional Administrator discussed the Draft Re-Evaluation with staff from U.S. Representative Schneider's (IL-10) office, staff from U.S. Representative Schakowsky's (IL-9) office, staff from U.S. Representative Krishnamoorthi's (IL-8) office, staff from U.S. Representative Quigley's (IL-5) office, Illinois State Representative Diane Pappas, and Chicago aldermen and suburban mayors;
- The Great Lakes Regional Administrator met with the CDA in Chicago's City Hall to discuss the proposed Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan. Jamie Rhee (CDA Commissioner) and staff, John Arena (Chicago Alderman), a member of the Mayor of Chicago's staff, and Catherine Dunlap (O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission Technical Committee Chair) attended. The group discussed the proposed Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan being planned around runway rehabilitation and construction during 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- A manager from the FAA's Office of Environment and Energy presented to the ONCC about the FAA's research on aviation noise, the noise complaint initiative, and efforts to mitigate aircraft noise.
- An FAA senior strategist for public and industry engagement provided an overview of departures procedures and the process of establishing new flight procedures for the ONCC's Fly Quiet Committee. The FAA's General Manager from the Lake Effect District supported the presentation by answering questions specific to O'Hare operations.

Long-Term Mitigation Measures

- Over the last 20 years, the FAA has collaborated with CDA and ONCC to execute one of the largest and most comprehensive residential and school sound insulation programs in the world. The total spending on these programs since they began is approximately \$550 million, providing sound insulation for 124 O'Hare-area schools and over 10,000 homes.
- The FAA issued a 2018 Airport Improvement Program grant of approximately \$11 million for residential sound insulation for approximately 500 homes within the 65 day-night average sound level (DNL) build out noise contour. The 2018 grant is the last being sought by CDA for insulation of homes inside the OMP build out noise contour. CDA sound insulation work

will continue for the remaining eligible homes (approximately 1,000) within the contour over the next couple of years.

- Following the completion of Runway 9C/27C, scheduled for November 2020, and Runway 9R/27L extension, scheduled for late 2021, O'Hare airport will have achieved its end state runway configuration in compliance with the 2005 Environmental Impact Statement.