



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Great Lakes Region
2300 East Devon Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60018

AUG 27 2013

Mr. Jac Charlier
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Charlier,

Thank you for your recent email to Susan Mowery-Schalk, Airports Division Manager, Federal Aviation Administration, Great Lakes Region. Ms. Mowery-Schalk asked me to respond on behalf of the agency. From your correspondence, it appears that runway utilization at O'Hare is of concern to you and the group you represent, Fair Allocation in Runways (FAiR).

The City of Chicago O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) is a multi-year reconfiguration of the airfield to essentially an east/west orientation. This project is a comprehensive redesign of the runways, taxiways, and other associated infrastructure. Throughout the life of the project, the runway usage and air traffic patterns adjust to accommodate operations and construction. When new runways are constructed and available for aircraft, the air traffic patterns adjust accordingly. In October 2013, the OMP is slated to commission Runway 10C-28C.

In 2002, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) began evaluating all of the proposed development and reconfiguration in the O'Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The FAA conducted a series of public meetings and responded to public comments, before finalizing and publishing its conclusions in a Record of Decision (ROD) in September 2005. Noise exposure, runway configuration, airspace configuration, air quality and impacts on surrounding communities were addressed through this extensive public process.

The airspace in and around the Chicago metropolitan area is complex, and runway utilization is based on many factors including wind and weather conditions, on-airfield work activities that may affect the availability of runways, and the interrelationship of O'Hare operations with operations at other nearby airports. In the OMP, the City of Chicago proposed a future runway configuration that would increase capacity and efficiency and improve safety. The existing and proposed runway operating configurations were designed to safely accommodate changing weather conditions while maintaining airport efficiency during construction and after completion. The FAA has participated in recent open houses hosted by the Chicago Department Aviation (CDA) and O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) in several communities east and northeast of O'Hare. These forums

have presented detailed information regarding the O'Hare Modernization and upcoming airspace and runway changes. Many of the topics you raise are explained in these meetings.

To respond specifically to your itemized list:

1. The CDA, as owner and operator of O'Hare, is the primary party and key decision maker with respect to any changes to implementation of the OMP. From a Federal perspective there is no reason to stop the plan for October 17, 2013. Appropriate due diligence was accomplished through a thorough environmental review and approval process which is documented in our EIS and ROD on O'Hare Modernization dated September 2005. Here is a link to those documents:

http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/

2. The FAA responded in detail to Park Ridge's request for the Supplemental EIS (SEIS). Park Ridge's requests did not provide sufficient information to warrant the preparation of a SEIS. The original EIS and ROD did address future conditions of the developed OMP.

Here are the links to the detailed responses provided to Park Ridge:

http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/FAQ/FAQ_2012/Media/2013-04-17PorterFinalResponse.pdf

http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/FAQ/Media/2012-02-23_Porter_Response.pdf

3. The environmental documents referenced in Item 1 detail how the runways will be utilized. As was analyzed and determined through the environmental studies, primary runway utilization at O'Hare will be in east/west flow. The runways that are oriented northeast/southwest (Runways 4R/22L and 4L/22R) will remain and be used primarily as departure runways. The northwest/southeast runways (Runways 14R/32L and 14L/32R) will be decommissioned. This plan provides improved safety and efficiency for O'Hare.

4. The noise impacts of the OMP were thoroughly analyzed as part of the EIS. CDA is implementing a sound insulation program which meets the mitigation requirements identified in the EIS. Any monitoring or abatement beyond what was determined as necessary in the EIS, are matters CDA and the ONCC could discuss.

5. The Airport Noise and Capacity Act (ANCA) of 1990, (the Federal noise legislation) provides a very involved process for establishing mandatory noise management programs. It requires a detailed economic analysis that shows the benefits of any proposed restrictions to aircraft operations must outweigh the potential lost commerce. The existing Fly Quiet Program, while not mandatory, is a result of a collaborative effort between CDA and the ONCC. The air carriers and FAA Air Traffic Control work with CDA and ONCC to implement this voluntary program. The ONCC is an independent coalition of 28 municipalities, Cook County, and 16 School Districts that represent 45 communities surrounding O'Hare. Many of the northwest suburbs and Chicago Wards 36, 38, 39, 41 and

45 have representatives to the ONCC. Since your community is a member of the ONCC, your concerns or recommendations regarding ONCC are best directed to your elected officials.

While it is acknowledged that O'Hare operations generate noise impacts on nearby residential areas, which exist on all sides of the airport, those impacts were thoroughly analyzed in the EIS. The EIS identified and mandated specific actions to mitigate noise impacts. The FAA works in cooperation with the airlines, the City of Chicago and the ONCC and supports their efforts with funding and technical guidance. Working with the City of Chicago and the ONCC, the FAA has provided approximately \$168 million for school sound insulation, and more than \$66 million for residential sound insulation to reduce the impacts of aircraft noise to communities adjacent to O'Hare. The FAA continues to participate with other Federal agencies, universities and industry groups in research to reduce noise impacts caused by airports.

The modernization of O'Hare International Airport is needed to meet Chicago's aviation demands of the future in a manner that provides improved safety and efficiency for the airport and public. Through its analysis of the OMP, the FAA took great care to examine health and safety concerns to ensure that all appropriate impact mitigation actions are taken. While we acknowledge that impacts such as noise cannot be completely eliminated, the FAA has taken significant steps to minimize those impacts, and we will continue to do so as technological advancements in the aviation industry provide those opportunities.

Thank you for sharing your perspective with the FAA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry D. Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the left.

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region