



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

Mission Support Services
800 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20591

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President Obama asked me to respond to your email dated May 20, 2014, concerning operations at O'Hare International Airport. From your letter it appears you have specific concerns about operations on the night of May 19, 2014, and also about runway utilization at O'Hare.

The Chicago Department of Aviation's Fly Quiet Program provides comprehensive guidance for pilots and air traffic controllers to voluntarily use designated flight and operating procedures during the program hours of 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. This use is defined by prevailing weather, aircraft loads, and other aspects concerning the safe operation of the aircraft and airspace. The preferred routes defined in Fly Quiet are intended to direct aircraft over less-populated areas, such as forest preserves, highways, as well as commercial and industrial areas. On the night of May 19th, the evening your letter stated you had specific concerns about operations, the airport was in an East Flow configuration, which means flights were landing and departing in an easterly direction. Traffic departing O'Hare flew in an easterly direction and then also may have turned to the North or South.

Regarding your concerns on runway utilization, in 2002, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) began evaluating all of the proposed development and reconfiguration for O'Hare 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 in September 2005. Noise exposure, runway configuration, airspace configuration, air quality and impacts on surrounding communities were addressed through the 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 O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP), the City of Chicago proposed a future runway configuration that would increase capacity, 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.

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 O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) and supports their efforts with funding and technical guidance. Working with the City of Chicago and the ONCC, the FAA has provided approximately \$168,000,000.00 for school sound insulation, and more than \$66,000,000.00 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 continues to take 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,



Elizabeth L. Ray
Vice President, Mission Support Services
Air Traffic Organization