



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

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

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Jim Grabowski  
City of Elmhurst  
209 North York Street  
Elmhurst, IL 60126-2759

Dear Mr. Grabowski:

Thank you for the list of follow up questions received by my office on January 12, 2018. Please see the below questions and corresponding answers:

**1. *I thought that landings on the runway impacting Elmhurst were going to stop. Why do they continue?***

Runway 4R/22L is the primary runway impacting the City of Elmhurst. The runway will remain in place and operational after the completion of the O'Hare Modernization Program.

In October 2013, the fourth east/west runway at O'Hare was commissioned, and with this runway, the airport changed to a predominantly east/west operation. As a result, Runway 4R (the approach over Elmhurst) has been used very infrequently for arrivals. However, the Fly Quiet Rotation tests conducted in 2016 and 2017 increased the use of 4R for arrivals at night.

Estimated use of Runway 4R/22L can be found in different documents, depending on the anticipated operations.

The 2015 Re-Evaluation shows model tracks for East and West flow for 2015 and 2020 interim conditions. The 2015 interim condition shows the airfield after the October 2015 opening of Runway 10R/28L, and the 2020 interim condition shows the airfield as it is planned to operate after the November 2020 opening of Runway 9C/27C until the extension of Runway 9R/27L is complete in November 2021. The estimated runway use can be found in Exhibits C-10, C-11, C-12 and C-13 of Appendix C of the Final Re-Evaluation of the O'Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement. Please refer to: [https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport\\_development/omp/eis\\_re\\_eval/](https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/eis_re_eval/)

The same information on runway use data expected to occur after airfield completion (November 2021) is shown in Table F-39 in Appendix F of the 2005 O'Hare Modernization EIS. Please refer to: [https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport\\_development/omp/eis/feis/Media/Appendix-F.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/eis/feis/Media/Appendix-F.pdf)

Information on the three Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation plan tests can be found at [www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest](http://www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest)

**2. *Is the current flight path, which has greatly increased the number of planes (both day & night) over my home, temporary or permanent?***

There is no plan to decommission Runway 4R/22L (the runway impacting Elmhurst). Runway 22L is currently used frequently as a departure runway when O'Hare is operating in an East or West Flow condition. When the O'Hare Modernization Program is complete, additional departure runways will be available for West Flow, and a portion of the departure traffic currently on Runway 22L will be on other runways. Runway 4R is used very infrequently for arrivals. It will continue to be available for arrivals, but used infrequently, after the O'Hare Modernization Program is completed.

On December 8, 2017, the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) voted to recommend a voluntary night-time program, the Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation (IFQ) be implemented at O'Hare. The proposed IFQ, if approved, could be in place from soon after the time of approval until the new Runway 9C/27C runway commissioning in November 2020. A continuation of the Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation would increase the use of Runway 4R for nighttime arrivals.

Please refer to the answer for question #1 for additional information on where to find the percentage usage of Runway 4R/22L under different operating scenarios.

**3. *Is there a plan to ever close the runway impacting Elmhurst? Why/not?***

There is no plan to close Runway 4R/22L. The runway is used extensively, is necessary to maintain the efficiency of operations at O'Hare, and is crucial during certain wind conditions when aircraft cannot operate on the east-west runways.

**4. *What programs are available to help protect our homes from the noise? Is there financial help with soundproofing our homes at a Federal level?***

The Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) manages the Residential Sound Insulation Program (RSIP) in close cooperation with the ONCC for communities surrounding O'Hare. The CDA has an established set of criteria for homes to be eligible for the RSIP. The FAA has issued approximately \$114 million in grants to fund residential sound insulation so that eligible homes will be insulated by the time all runway projects that are part of the O'Hare Modernization Program are complete. You can find more information on CDA's RSIP at <http://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/SoundInsulation/Pages/default.aspx>.

**5. *How much weight is given to the data from the 3 test runs, beyond ONCC's recommendation? Surveys vs. complaints vs. noise data?***

The FAA uses the noise complaint and survey data for informational purposes only. The complaint data was not used by the CDA as an analysis tool for the IFQ testing, since the number and location of complaints cannot be verified.

**6. *How much impact does the O'Hare noise complaint system (i.e., phone call complaints) have on decision-making for approval of current Fly-Quiet Plan vs. changing the plan to appease communities with excessive noise?***

The FAA has no role in the CDA's complaint system, and the FAA uses the noise complaint and survey data for informational purposes only. When the FAA does an environmental review of the proposed IFQ runway rotation, the FAA will conduct public outreach sessions. Feedback received during public outreach will be considered during the environmental review.

**7. *How much consideration is being put into an ONCC recommendation when, A) there is no definitive decision-making process behind that recommendation? B) the ONCC is stacked with east-west communities?***

The FAA has previously stated that fly quiet recommendations/requests must come from the CDA. The CDA, as owner and operator of O'Hare, has the primary responsibility to maintain safe, secure and orderly airport operations to include noise management. The FAA reviews proposals submitted by the CDA for safety and environmental impact in accordance with the federal law, regulations, and FAA policies.

ONCC is an intergovernmental agency with its own by laws and intergovernmental agreements. The FAA is not a member of the ONCC and has no authority over its governance structure. The FAA works collaboratively with the CDA, airlines, ONCC and other community organizations and leaders, to listen and to understand the needs and preferences of all interested parties.

**8. *The ONCC does not have a defined decision-making process, only a recent white paper offering guidance. This means community reps can vote strictly based on what is best for their community. East-west communities outnumber diagonals. How will that be taken into consideration?***

Please see the answer for question # 7.

**9. *When will the FAA make their final decision?***

On December 8, 2017, the ONCC voted to recommend an IFQ runway rotation be implemented at O'Hare. To be clear, the request is for an *interim* rotation. The proposed IFQ, if approved, could be in place from soon after the time of an approval until the new Runway 9C/27C commissioning in November 2020. The FAA estimates it could take about a year to analyze the proposed Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation for environmental and operational impacts after CDA submits it to FAA.

**10. *Does the FAA feel test #3 is a fair allocation of night fly quiet program i.e., ½ the flights will be on five parallel runways and the other ½ on two diagonal runways.***

The FAA completed an environmental review of the Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation Test 3 and determined compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The document is available at [www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest](http://www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest).

**11. *A. Why is night time runway rotation needed? There are 3.14 miles between the furthest north runway 9L/27R and the furthest south runway?***

***B. Why does the FAA (and CDA) accept ONCC recommendations so readily? Runway rotation test 3 was passed/accepted without adequate review of the data.***

The request for a runway rotation arose from the desire of the communities surrounding O'Hare to establish such a program. The CDA collaborated with the ONCC.

The FAA accepted the requests for each of the tests from the CDA, not the ONCC. The FAA completed an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act for the IFQ runway rotation Test 3.

***12. If we reject the overnight flight plan, will that cause a greater increase in daytime jet noise?***

No. The frequency and scheduling of flights throughout the day are driven by the airlines and are based on passenger demand, connecting flight schedules and other factors. The runways and associated arrival/departure flight paths aircraft use during the day is determined primarily by wind direction, origin/destination, and efficiency of traffic flows.

***13. How do changes to the quantity of nighttime flights brought on by a potential nighttime rotation impact the already completed Environmental Impact Study?***

Although we do not anticipate that a nighttime rotation would impact the overall quantity of nighttime flights, we are aware it could impact the number of flights which occur on each runway. Since the proposal for an IFQ program is different from the Fly Quiet Program assumed in the EIS, a written re-evaluation of the EIS will be done in accordance with federal laws, regulations, and FAA policies.

***14. What is the approx. budget for environmental studies to be completed?***

The FAA is working with a third party contracting team to develop a scope of work and budget for the analysis of the IFQ runway rotation.

***15. Can a newly created committee of northeast/southeast 4R/22L diagonal communities propose flight path recommendations to the FAA? Why is an updated Environmental Impact Study needed since one was completed for the OMP?***

The FAA has and will continue to listen to and receive input from all communities. The FAA, however, is not the owner and operator of O'Hare. The CDA has the primary responsibility to maintain safe, secure and orderly airport operations to include noise management. The FAA reviews proposals from the CDA and evaluates them for safety of operations and environmental impacts.

Based on a preliminary review of the proposed changes, the FAA believes a reevaluation of the O'Hare Modernization EIS is needed.

***16. Is parallel with diagonal runways the safest configuration?***

All runway configurations currently proposed for operations and utilized at O'Hare are safe.

***17. Wide-body A/C – is there a min runway length?***

Each airline makes the determination whether an aircraft is able to use an assigned runway. Requests for a longer runway are accommodated by CDA. Air Traffic operates using the

runways the CDA provides for use.

**18. *Is 4R/22L safe for wide-bodied aircraft?***

Runway 4R/22L is an Aircraft Design Group V runway, which is safe for wide bodied aircraft.

**19. *Do wide body planes, like the cargo planes landing at night on the shorter diagonal runways like 4R22L, have to fly lower on approach to land safely?***

No, wide body planes do not have to fly lower on approach to Runway 4R/22L to land. The FAA uses a standard (3 degree) approach for all arrival approaches at O'Hare.

**20. *For arrivals, what is a safe elevation for planes flying in residential area?***

Glide paths are set at a standard 3 degree approach to the runway thresholds. The area below that approach has been cleared as appropriate for FAA safety margins. Aircraft have instruments within the aircraft and visual approach NAVAIDS on the airport to indicate to them if they are too low for a safe approach, at which point the aircraft will go around and attempt to land again. That elevation is about 300 feet for every 1 mile away from the runway threshold.

**21. *Are the planes landing lower than in the past? These planes are so much louder than in the past.***

The FAA standard (3 degree) approach has not changed at O'Hare. This standard approach is applicable for all runways and aircraft at O'Hare. The FAA standard is based on safety and aircraft capabilities. Please also see the answer to question #19.

**22. *What is the FAA process to evaluate CDA/ONCC flight path proposals? Will 4R/22L be used more frequently (outside of night-time rotation)?***

On December 8, 2017, the ONCC voted to recommend an IFQ runway rotation be implemented at O'Hare. The proposed IFQ, if approved, could be in place from soon after the time of an approval until the new Runway 9C/27C runway commissioning in November 2020. The FAA estimates it could take about a year to analyze the proposed Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation for environmental and operational impacts after CDA submits it to FAA.

Please refer to the answer to question #1 for the usage of Runway 4R/22L.

**23. *Why are runways being de-commissioned when an adequate night rotation is not yet in place?***

Which runways close or remain open is dictated by safety, efficiency, and constructability considerations.

The EIS conclusions are not dependent on the evaluation of the IFQ runway rotation that was voted on by the ONCC on December 8, 2017. Those conclusions pre-date the ONCC vote by approximately 12 years.

Runway 14L/32R and Runway 14R/32L (currently Runway 15/33) were disclosed to be decommissioned in the 2005 O'Hare Modernization EIS. The Record of Decision on the EIS approved the Build Out airfield, which includes six parallel east-west runways and two diagonal SW-NE runways (the 4/22 runways). After careful analysis, this configuration was determined to be the safest and most efficient alternative that still meets the airport users' needs.

***24. In absence of an interim or final OMP Fly Quiet Plan, can we reasonably expect flight conditions to return to levels which began October 2013 but prior to Test 2 & 3?***

In the absence of an approved IFQ Rotation plan, you can expect the usage to return to levels as from October 2015, when the latest new runway was opened. Please refer to the answer for question #1.

***25. What is future capacity of O'Hare? What is the long term (2021 & beyond) plan for the percentage of 4R-22L take-offs/landings at daytime & at nighttime?***

Future operations at O'Hare are forecasted by the FAA's Terminal Area Forecast for O'Hare. This can be found at <https://taf.faa.gov/>

The average arrival percentages for Runway 4R and the departure percentages for Runway 22L, after the completion of O'Hare Modernization in November 2021, are shown in Table F-39 in Appendix F of the 2005 OM EIS. Please refer to:

[https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport\\_development/omp/eis/feis/Media/Appendix-F.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/eis/feis/Media/Appendix-F.pdf)

***26. Will Runway 9/27C be used in future runway rotation?***

New Runway 9C/27C will be commissioned in November 2020. Assuming "future runway rotation" is referring to a future fly quiet rotation, the FAA is not aware of a proposed plan for an IFQ runway rotation beyond November 2020 when Runway 9C/27C is commissioned. Any new runway rotation program will need to be requested by the CDA for evaluation by the FAA for environmental and operational impacts.

***27. Is the FAA verifying data sets used by the ONCC to develop fly quiet plans? Is the FAA holding the ONCC accountable for their fly quiet plans? Minority voices are not equally considered when majority interests are at stake. In 2015, the FAA said that 4R would be used very infrequently for arrivals, is that still true? If so, how was 4R allowed to have 33% of all fly quiet arrivals allocated for test 3?***

The FAA completed an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act for the IFQ runway rotation Test 3. The document is available at [www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest](http://www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest).

Please refer to the answer for question #1 for the usage of Runway 4R/22L.

On December 8, 2017, the ONCC voted to recommend an IFQ runway rotation be implemented at O'Hare. It is CDA's decision if that plan will be submitted to FAA or not. The FAA holds CDA accountable for the safe operation at O'Hare, and reviews whatever plans CDA submits to us for operational, safety, and environmental impacts.

**28. 4R/22L has been planned to close as part of 15-20-year-old expansion plan. Was based largely on safety- why now is a revolving plan in place—w/very little notice & when will it end? How/who makes the decision to abort the original plan? What is the current plan?**

As part of the construction of the O'Hare Modernization Program approved in the 2005 OM EIS, Runways 4R/22L and 4L/22R, which are the northeast-southwest diagonals, were always planned to remain in operation. The proposed IFQ, if approved, could be in place from soon after FAA approval until the new Runway 9C/27C runway commissioning in November 2020. The FAA is not aware of a proposed plan for an IFQ runway rotation beyond November 2020. Any new runway rotation program will need to be requested by the CDA for evaluation by the FAA for safety, environmental and operational impacts.

**29. Will the FAA's final assessments of the 3 test phases disregard noise complaints and instead focus on safety and emergency when it comes to scheduled use of runways on a going forward basis?**

The FAA will hold public outreach sessions for the proposed IFQ runway rotation plan and listen to the community's concerns. Please refer to the answer to question #6 for the FAA's role in the CDA's complaint system. The FAA completed an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act for the IFQ runway rotation Tests 1, 2 and 3. The documents are available at [www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest](http://www.flychicago.com/flyquiettest). All of the proposed IFQ runway rotation configurations have been coordinated with the FAA. The FAA also provided additional comments to CDA after the completion of IFQ Runway Rotation Test 1. All of the configurations currently proposed for the Interim Fly Quiet runway rotation can be operated safely.

**30. Can the North South Towers be opened at night? Is there any hope to keep open 15/33? Why can't planes @ O'Hare have a flight pattern similar to LAX. Their flight pattern is designed to minimize noise.**

The North and South air traffic control towers are not open from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., as operational demand is lower at that time.

Under the CDA's current approved plan, Runway 15/33 will be decommissioned on March 29, 2018. We have no reason to believe the CDA will request to change that plan.

Should the CDA request to keep Runway 15/33 open, or propose a different, permanent flight pattern change, extensive environmental review would be required, with substantial public outreach prior to FAA approval.

**31. Has a Metro-plex scheme using the airports been developed? To share noise.**

If this question refers to distributing air traffic among multiple airports in a metropolitan area, we offer the below response:

The FAA does not have the legal authority to direct where carriers provide service. Airline/cargo operators determine where they will provide service and with what equipment. There is no prohibition on the types of aircraft using O'Hare. O'Hare can accept up to a maximum size of an Aircraft Design Group VI (Boeing 747-800 and Airbus 380).

The FAA analyzed the use of other airports as an alternative to the O'Hare Modernization Program in the 2005 OM EIS. After review, the use of other airports (including General Mitchell Milwaukee International Airport, Gary/Chicago Airport, the proposed South Suburban Airport, and others) did not meet the purpose and need for the project and was dismissed from further consideration.

If this question refers to the FAA's existing Metroplex program, we offer the below response:

The FAA uses the term Metroplex to define metropolitan areas with multiple airports and complex air traffic flows. The FAA's goal with the Metroplex program is to improve airport access and make flight routes more efficient around metropolitan areas with complex airspace and multiple airports.

Information on the FAA's Metroplex program can be found at <https://www.faa.gov/nextgen/snapshots/metroplexes/>.

Although not done as part of the Metroplex program, the FAA undertook a large redesign of the airspace for the Chicago metropolitan area as part of the O'Hare Modernization. Airspace and procedure changes were implemented in phases between 2007 and 2013. These airspace changes were evaluated as part of the O'Hare Modernization EIS.

I trust this information is helpful. If you would like to discuss in further detail, please feel free to contact me at 847-294-7294

Sincerely,



Rebecca B. MacPherson  
Regional Administrator  
Great Lakes Region