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

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

SEP 23 2010

Dear

Thank you for your letter of August 31, 2010 regarding your concerns about the aircraft noise over the athletic fields at Maine South High School located in Park Ridge, Illinois.

In your letter, you reference my July 9, 2010 letter to Citizen 13 posted on our Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) website. It states that "school athletic fields are, in fact, designated as school property, rather than public parks, when their primary function is to support school activities". While this statement is true, your conclusion that makes them incompatible is incorrect. School athletic fields are defined under Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 150, Appendix A, Table 1, *Land Use Compatibility-With Yearly Day-Night Average Sound Levels*, as outdoor sports arenas. Simply stated, school athletic fields fall under different criteria than school buildings. Outdoor arenas and spectator sports are considered compatible up to 75 decibels (dB) provided special sound reinforcement systems are installed. It is my understanding the Maine South High School athletic fields are equipped with state-of the-art public sports announcement systems and therefore compatible.

Regarding your questions on maximum single event nose levels within a noise sensitive area, the FAA does not have, nor does it use, a single event standard for noise mitigation. The supplemental noise metrics presented in the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are for disclosure and informational purposes only. The FAA has determined that the cumulative noise energy exposure of individuals to noise resulting from aviation activities must be established in terms of the day-night average sound level (DNL) in decibels (dB). DNL is the FAA's primary metric for aviation noise analysis. The supplemental noise metrics, including SEL Day (which is the peak Sound Exposure Level modeled during the day), are presented on Page F-116 of Appendix F of the EIS.

You also stated in your letter that according to the noise contour maps, the athletic fields at Maine South High School are within the 65 DNL. The Integrated Noise Model (INM), FAA's accepted noise modeling tool, relies on fixed address points in order to establish a DNL value at a certain location. School DNL values are based on physical address, not on the overall school grounds. Therefore, the DNL value for Maine South is based on the INM data point at the school building. The O'Hare Modernization Program Build-Out noise data from which the contour is drawn shows the DNL value of Maine South High School building at 62.3dB (see page F-100 of Appendix F of the EIS). Maine South High School was included in the 1998 City of Chicago O'Hare Airport 100% Passenger Facility Charge-

funded sound insulation program. All of the work was completed in compliance with FAA accepted school sound insulation mitigation standards.

The FAA has, and will continue to work collaboratively with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), regarding O'Hare development and aircraft noise. You may be interested to know that the US EPA, and over one hundred other Federal, state, and local agencies worked with the FAA throughout the OMP EIS process.

The EIS for the O'Hare modernization appropriately studied impacts to the communities surrounding O'Hare. The EIS determined appropriate mitigations for these impacts, and the City of Chicago is providing mitigation as required. As stated above, DNL is the standard used to assess airport noise impacts. The data contained in the EIS is accurate, and an update to the EIS is not required. The modernization of O'Hare International Airport is needed to meet the area's aviation demands of the future in a manner that provides the greatest degree of safety and efficiency for the airport and the public. 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,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region

cc: Susan Hedman, Regional Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
Sherry Kamke, Environmental Protection Agency
Dr. Ken Wallace, Superintendent, High School District 207
Sean Sullivan, Board President, High School District 207