

January 10, 2012

Mr. Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. LaHood,

As a resident of Park Ridge, Illinois and a citizen of the United States, I am writing to ask you to support the Park Ridge O'Hare Airport Commission's (PROAC) endeavor to secure from the FAA a supplemental environmental impact study (SEIS) for the city of Park Ridge. The expansion of O'Hare Airport (commonly called the OMP, O'Hare Modernization Plan) has had a detrimental effect on the quality of life in Park Ridge and we need your intervention with the FAA in order to prove this.

Federal agencies are required to produce a supplemental EIS whenever substantial changes are made to a project or when significant new information regarding environmental concerns is presented relative to that project. Information contained within the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) reports about the O'Hare expansion is cause for concern and should be considered when a request for a supplemental EIS is made. For example, reports show the number of daily average noise events created by this air traffic, is 85 decibels or greater. Standard threshold for airport noise was set at 65 decibels using a day/night averaging formula over a 24 hour period (web.mil.edu). Many scientists recommend levels of less than 55 decibels as being the better standard for overall health. The FAA even has supported this conclusion, yet will not move forward with an SEIS for Park Ridge. They have the power to order a supplemental EIS if they believe it will allay the concerns of the community that noise and air quality levels are not worse than what was anticipated in the current EIS. This is a discretionary action on the part of the FAA. There is current indisputable information indicating that noise and air quality levels are well beyond levels reported in the current EIS.

The facts of the effects of airport growth on residential communities cannot continue to be ignored. To give you a little history, in November of 2008 the first new runway in 40 years opened at O'Hare, directly over Belle Plains Avenue, one of our main residential streets, sending as many as 400 flights daily over homes on Belle Plains. This more than doubles what the community has historically experienced. The homes, schools and places of worship of some 6,000 residents have been put in danger. Can you imagine this? To go from a quiet neighborhood to a place where, on some days, there are flights as loud or louder than a lawn mower occurring every 45 seconds for hours on end. My mom personally counted approximately 400 planes overhead one day in a twelve hour period. Air and noise pollution have increased, safety is a huge concern (imagine if it were your grandchildren playing ball on one of those athletic fields, or your daughter trying to raise her kids in the once-quiet community but who can no longer use their back yard in peace); sleep is being disrupted, property values have plummeted, and the quality of life has decreased considerably. In addition, a cargo facility is being built on the north side of the airport which will bring the loudest planes directly over our homes in the middle of the night. Park Ridge is forecasted to receive up to 250% more flight activity when O'Hare expansion is complete; over 1,000 flights daily throughout the day and night. (Park Ridge O'Hare Airport Commission Aldermanic Update Report, August 15, 2011)

We need relief, and I believe that starts with demanding by law that a supplemental Environmental Impact Study be conducted. Many residents express a sense of helplessness and believe nothing can be done to fight the government. I refuse to give up; I know that you as an elected official, care about your constituents. The World Health Organization defines the effects of airport noise as an education to include impacts on reading test scores, learned helplessness relative to motivation, delays in language acquisition and memory deficits. (Health Effects of Aviation Noise, UC Symposium on Aviation Noise and Air Quality, March 2007, Harris Miller Miller & Hanson - (www.hmmh.com)). To put that in perspective, we are talking about our future leaders being affected during their developmental years here.

I hope that you have gained by my letter, a better understanding of the significant issues caused by unmitigated airport expansion. As a federally elected official, it is incumbent upon you to support our community's concerns. Thank you for your time and for considering our plight in Park Ridge, Illinois.

Sincerely,