

FAA News



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FAA RECORD OF DECISION APPROVES O'HARE MODERNIZATION

City of Chicago Can Begin Work to Improve Airport Safety and Capacity

CHICAGO, Illinois—The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) today issued its Record of Decision (ROD) that determines the City of Chicago's O'Hare Modernization Program and Airport Layout Plan is the best alternative to improve safety, increase capacity and reduce delays with the least environmental impact.

The FAA's approval completes on schedule the most extensive environmental review process in the agency's history on schedule and allows the City to begin construction work at O'Hare International Airport.

"Expanding capacity at Chicago's O'Hare airport will save travelers time, make our skies safer, and reduce delays across the entire aviation network," said Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta. "We have taken a close look at every possible option and settled on the one that provides the best results for air travelers nationwide."

"O'Hare is now cleared for takeoff to a future with greater safety and capacity," said FAA Administrator Marion C. Blakey. "Modernizing O'Hare is not only essential for the Chicagoland area, but also for the efficiency of our nation's aviation system. If implemented successfully by the City, this plan will mean more flights and better on-time performance for travelers around the country connecting through this critical hub."

Among the alternative airport plans and a "no-build" option the FAA reviewed, the City's proposed plan delivers the airport capacity to handle a forecasted 1.2 million take-offs and landings annually (300,000 more than current capacity), reduces delays by two-thirds, and improves safety by cutting active runway crossings by more than half, according to the report.

The City's plan also would reduce costs due to delays by nearly \$2.5 billion, based on the industry average of \$25 per delay minute. The cost of taking no action to modernize

O'Hare is nearly \$4.2 billion in delay costs as compared to just over \$1.7 billion in projected delay costs in the City's plan, the FAA said.

"These capacity and safety benefits would be realized by 2018 with the completion of all phases of the modernization program," Blakey said. "A modernized O'Hare should also provide greater efficiency to the nation's overall aviation system because of its central location and unique status serving two major carriers. It is estimated that 25% of delays nationwide can be attributed to congestion at O'Hare."

The ROD reflects 3 ½ years of comprehensive environmental analysis involving 16 separate federal, state, regional and local government agencies and backed by over 9 million pages of documentation. The FAA also hired the auditing firm of John F. Brown Company, to provide independent cost-benefit and financial analysis of the modernization program.

The ROD also outlines mitigation actions that the City will need to accomplish in various environmental areas, including: air quality; noise; land acquisition; flood plains; and, cemetery relocations.

The complete Record of Decision plus replies to public comments are available on the FAA's O'Hare project web site at www.agl.faa.gov/OMP/ROD.

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