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

Great Lakes Region
2300 E. Devon Ave.
Des Plaines, IL 60018

AUG 25 2009

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated June 9, 2009 with your concerns regarding Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) day/night average sound level (DNL) standards and your suggestion to employ Continuous Descent Approach (CDA) procedures in conjunction with the operation of the new runway configuration at O'Hare International Airport.

The FAA is keenly aware that aircraft noise continues to affect communities near airports, despite large reductions in noise exposure over the last several decades resulting from increased Federal standards mandating quieter aircraft. While past research throughout the world has shown that community annoyance from cumulative noise exposure has correlated well with the current DNL standard, the FAA agrees that it is timely to undertake a new systematic review of the standard. We further acknowledge Congresswoman Schakowsky's high interest in ensuring that this review takes place.

The FAA has initiated research to investigate noise metrics that best correlate with the human response to noise exposure. We are currently developing a comprehensive research effort, in partnership with NASA and NavCanada, to establish new or updated relationships between noise exposure metrics and the health and welfare impacts of noise programs. More can be learned about this initiative at: http://web.mit.edu/aeroastro/partner/index.html.

Regarding CDA, the FAA is indeed studying and developing CDA procedures, and we have successfully implemented CDA at locations such as Atlanta, Louisville, and Los Angeles. CDA can provide energy efficiency and noise reduction, and it is a key component of the FAA's Next Generation air traffic management concept. The FAA intends to pursue the utilization of CDA procedures wherever possible in the coming years. Our early CDA applications have been accomplished at locations where our current airspace and air route configurations have allowed its application. As you may know, the airspace in and around Chicago is some of the busiest and most complex airspace in the country. Consequently, while the application of CDA procedures at O'Hare is certainly in the FAA's long-range plan, it cannot be accomplished today due to these airspace complexities.

final approach will be at approximately the same altitude whether they are utilizing CDA procedures or the conventional Instrument Landing System (ILS) procedures that are used at O'Hare today. The aircraft will be following a standard three degree glide path to the arrival runway under either procedure at that point, and at 15 miles from the approach end of the arrival runway the aircraft will be at approximately a 4200' altitude.

In summary, CDA capability is a key component of the FAA's Next Generation system, and the FAA intends to pursue utilization of this capability where and when its implementation enhances the efficiency of the National Airspace System.

As stated above, the FAA appreciates your concerns, and we are in communication with Congresswoman Schakowsky's office to ensure that she is aware of the actions we are taking to address her concerns as well.

The FAA has fielded a number of questions since its work on the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) began. Additional information and "Frequently Asked Questions" relating to the OMP can be found at:
http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/FAQ/index.cfm.

Sincerely,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region

cc: Brian Gilligan, Executive Director, O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission
Honorable Arlene Mulder, Chair, O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission
Honorable Mary Ann Smith, Alderman 48th Ward, City of Chicago
Representative Jan Schakowsky