

To: Reef Ecosystems <reefecosystems.com@live.com>
From: Christina Drouet/AGL/FAA
Date: 11/21/2009 07:29AM
cc: <jhock@parkridge.us>, Jennifer Perry <jenniferperry835@comcast.net>, barry.cooper@faa.gov
Subject: Re: Park Ridge ORD comission

Dear Bill,

Below please find the FAA's responses to the City of Park Ridge and the Park Ridge O'Hare Commission questions you addressed to me on November 3, 2008. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions you may have.

1. With a meeting with our mayor it was indicated that the air traffic controllers give a "suggested heading," but that individual pilots are basically given veto power over the suggestion because they are the best judge of how to safely take off. Variables include the weight of the aircraft and its payload. In a nutshell, "preferred flight paths" are strictly voluntary for now." Why are preferred flight paths voluntary? And can pilots really deviate from ATC vectors on late night or daytime departures?

"Preferred flight paths" is a term usually used in conjunction with O'Hare's Fly Quiet Program. This program is a voluntary, collaborative plan established between the airport owner (City of Chicago), air carriers, FAA and the communities surrounding O'Hare as represented by the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC). Airlines agreed to use designated noise abatement flight procedures under the Fly Quiet Program to further reduce the impact of aircraft noise. The Fly Quiet Program provides comprehensive guidance for pilots to use designated quiet flight and operating procedures. The City of Chicago distributes Fly Quiet Aviator's Manuals to airline pilots and Air Traffic Controllers. The manual contains information on preferred runways and flight tracks which route aircraft over the least populated areas -- such as forest preserves, highways, as well as commercial and industrial areas. The flight paths are voluntary, as is the entire program. The FAA does not require the City to undertake this effort. It is the City's decision, as owner and operator of O'Hare, to pursue these types of initiatives.

You can find more information on the Fly Quiet Program at the City of Chicago 's web site:

http://www.ohare.com/cnrc/ohare/ohare_noise_flyquiet_report.shtm

Or at the ONCC's web site:

http://www.oharenoise.org/fly_quiet_program.htm

(If you copy these links rather than utilize them as links, please note the underscore rather than spaces between the words)

In all situations, Air Traffic Controllers give headings. Pilots are expected to comply with Air Traffic instructions unless they advise that they are unable. Keep in mind, the pilot is still the sole last decision maker for the safe operation of the aircraft. If Air Traffic issues an instruction that the pilot believes will compromise the safety of the aircraft, the pilot will deal with the situation first, and then advise Air Traffic. Based on our experience, this is a rare exception for safety purposes.

2. When runway 27R was proposed, sold and was labeled a bad weather runway. “ **O’Hare International Airport** : At O’Hare International Airport, the new Runway 9L/27R is O’Hare’s first new runway since 1971. The 7,500 foot long runway will be used primarily as a bad-weather arrival runway, addressing one of O’Hare’s biggest causes of delay. It is a Group 5 CAT II/III Runway, designed for planes as large as a Boeing 747. CAT II/III Capability is the best available for landing arriving airplanes in inclement weather. The runway is also equipped with a state-of-the-art Instrument Landing System as well as embedded weather sensors in the pavement to alert the tower of ice on the runway.” http://aci-na.org/news/2008_Nov20
Why is it now used as a primary runway?

Runway 9L/27R is considered an all-weather runway. O’Hare will receive the greatest benefits of the new runway during bad weather conditions by allowing air traffic controllers to utilize a third east-west parallel runway for aircraft arrivals. In order to maintain a safe and efficient airspace, the FAA utilizes all seven of O’Hare’s current runways as needed depending on airfield, air traffic, and weather conditions.

Projected usage of the runways was disclosed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and source documents made available for public review and comment prior to the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The FAA met with, and provided information to, the O’Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) and communities surrounding O’Hare, and reviewed and accepted public comments prior to approving the City’s requested runway alignment. The FAA is aware that the City of Chicago’s press documents and website may have created some confusion on how/when Runway 9L/27R would be used. When we became aware of this last year, the FAA requested the City amend their information. The FAA is not in a position to address what sources were used in the article you referenced.

This information can also be found on our web site:

<http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport%5Fdevelopment/omp/FAQ/Runway%5FUtilization/>

3. Arrivals on the PAITN ONE ARRIVAL (PAITN.PAITN1) 14 Nov 08 are lined up perfectly with the Final Approach Fix FNUCH on Runway 22R. Why are the airlines subject to an additional 5 minutes flight time and an additional 10-15 minutes taxi time resulting from landing Runway 27R under Day VMC conditions (nice weather)? Why are aircraft arriving on the Janesville Five Arrival (JVL.JVL5) 6 Mar 09 subject to an additional 10-15 minutes taxi time?

We understand this question to ask "Why are Runway 27R approaches preferred to Runway 22R approaches?" The following responds to our understanding of the question:

The taxi time from a Runway 27R arrival to the terminal is longer than for an aircraft arriving on Runway 22R. However, less than one third of the aircraft that land at O'Hare in the west arrival configuration (landing from east to west, using Runways 27R, 27L and 28) have a longer taxi in route. All of the aircraft in this landing configuration receive the benefits of the runway. Enroute spacing delays are reduced or eliminated, aircraft are not being required to slow farther from the runway, and flow programs that hold aircraft on the ground at other airports destined for O'Hare have been greatly reduced. One of O'Hare's major carriers has indicated that all phases of their operations (including average taxi-in time) are reduced since Runway 9L/27R was commissioned.

The previous paragraph only addresses the positive benefit the runway has had in reducing delays. In addition to changes on the ground at O'Hare, the FAA changed airspace design east of the airport, creating additional departure routes, and another arrival route from the southeast. These changes help improve efficiency, capacity as well as reduce delays.

The National Airspace System is complex, and metropolitan areas such as Chicago are congested and very complex. Traffic flow can not be changed at a moment's notice. Traffic destined eastbound from O'Hare would not realize the added east departure capability if we continue to land on Runways 22R, 27L and 28 during slower periods. Rather than three departure streams of eastbound traffic available when landing 27R, 27L, and 28, we are restricted to one path eastbound. Additionally, under the former configuration, we would have to restrict departure aircraft under the new arrival stream for 27L (high and wide). Aircraft would be flying at 10,000' into South Bend airspace.

We have no data to respond to your question regarding longer flying time for Runway 27R arrivals. While it is possible Runway 27R arrivals may have longer flight times than those directed to Runways 27L or 28, the new airfield configuration has yielded improved capacity and reduced flight times for the overall airport user.

4. Landing a Parallel configuration is easier. At what traffic volume is this necessary and why is not the pre November 2008 west landing configuration used when the weather is VMC winds are out of the southwest and volume is at or below that of Nov 2008?

The parallel runway configuration provides many benefits to the airport and its users, as detailed in the response to Question 3, above. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) thoroughly analyzed this airport configuration, along with others, and provides the justification for this operating configuration.

5. Does the EIS prevent a landing configuration using 22R, 28 and 27L? Basically the pre November 2008 west configuration.

No, the EIS does not prevent the landing configuration you suggest. However, with the completion of the airspace and airfield changes to date, it is an inefficient and capacity constraining arrival configuration. This is further explained in the response to Question 3, above. The Final EIS addresses arrival rates for various runways. Please reference Table F-39 on page F-82:

<ftp://public-ftp.agl.faa.gov/ORD%20FEIS/Appendix%20F/Appendix-F.pdf>

From this document you can see that less than 1.0% of total arrivals will use Runway 22R when the OMP is complete.

6. Who is ultimately responsible for determining landing configuration and what specific criteria do they use?

The City of Chicago advises FAA Air Traffic Control which runways are available for use. Some runways may be closed for maintenance, snow removal or other reasons. It is the City's responsibility to determine which runways are in usable condition.

FAA's O'Hare Air Traffic Control staff determines the arrival and departure configurations after being advised by the City what runways are available. There are many different sources of information that are then used to determine the operating configuration. Information considered includes, but is not limited to: current winds, projected winds, weather, precipitation, visibility, ceiling, impacts on surrounding air traffic facilities, and on-airfield construction activities.

7. Winter is coming. Under the OMP will aircraft be deiced at the gate? If so how will the excess propylene glycol be collected and what volume is allowed to saturate the soil and air under current EPA guidelines? Is it acceptable under EPA and OSHA guidelines for passengers and ground crew to walk and work on a tarmac saturated with propylene glycol?

The City of Chicago is responsible for O'Hare airfield operations. Each air carrier determines what its practice is regarding use of jet bridges or loading passengers from the ramp areas. Therefore your question is best directed to City of Chicago Aviation Department or the particular carrier(s) with which you have concerns.

In general, the State and Federal governments regulate deicing compounds used at airports through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, established by the Federal Clean Water Act. The deicing process and its environmental impacts were addressed in the FAA's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

<ftp://public-ftp.agl.faa.gov/ORD%20FEIS/Section%205.7.pdf>

Your question regarding possible employee and passenger exposure to deicing chemicals is best directed to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Illinois or US Environmental Protection Agencies. The FAA has no oversight or regulatory responsibilities with regard to this portion of your question.

Christina Drouet, P.E.
Manager, Chicago Modernization Program Office
847-294-7812
847-721-2672 (mobile)