U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Office of the Assistant Administrator for Policy,
Planning and Environment

800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington DC, 20591

March 11, 2009

Arlene J. Mulder
Mayor, Village of Arlington Heights
Chairperson, O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission
P.O. Box 1126
Des Plaines, IL 60017-1126

Dear Mayor Mulder:

Thank you for your January 21 letter to Acting Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Lynne Osmus, expressing your interest in a re-examination of metrics currently used to assess aircraft noise in order to ensure that they appropriately account for frequency of flights and annoyance to residents around airports.

First, I want to thank you and the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission for your support of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), your engagement in FAA's Center of Excellence—the Partnership for Air Transportation Noise and Emissions Reduction (PARTNER), and your collaborative approach with other stakeholders to reduce the impact of aircraft noise in the communities surrounding O'Hare International Airport.

The FAA is keenly aware that aircraft noise continues to affect airport communities despite large reductions in noise exposure over the last several decades. While decades of research throughout the world continue to show that community annoyance from cumulative noise energy exposure correlates well with the day/night average sound level (DNL), we agree that it is timely to undertake a new systematic review.

PARTNER has initiated research to investigate noise metrics that best correlate with human response to noise exposure. We at FAA are presently developing the comprehensive research effort needed to definitively establish new or updated relationships between noise exposure metrics and the health and welfare impacts of noise. At the same time, we are pursuing plans to enable earlier maturation of new aircraft noise reduction technologies through our proposed Continuous Low Emissions, Energy, and Noise (CLEEN) initiative. As you know, being able to move forward with that initiative is dependent on appropriation of funds. We also remain actively engaged in demonstrating and implementing low noise operational procedures.

We look forward to working with you as we pursue the research needed to answer your concerns regarding aircraft noise metrics and impacts. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Carl Burleson if you have further questions or concerns. Thank you again for your positive contribution in fostering both dialogue and solutions important for communities and the aviation industry.

Sincerely,

Nancy D. LoBue

Nancy D. LoBue
Acting Assistant Administrator for Aviation Policy,
Planning and Environment