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

Great Lakes Region
2300 E. Devon Avenue
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018

JAN 09 2009

The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky
Member, United States House of Representatives
5533 North Broadway
Chicago, IL 60640

Dear Congresswoman Schakowsky:

Thank you for your December 17, 2008 letter to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) about the new Runway 9L-27R at O'Hare International Airport. We appreciate your continuing support for O'Hare Modernization and thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns about the impact of the new runway on Park Ridge residents.

In your letter, you asked if anything can be done to reduce the volume of planes using the new runway or to otherwise reduce the noise Park Ridge residents are experiencing from this runway. As you know, managing the volume of air traffic arriving and departing O'Hare each day is a complex task. The FAA uses all available runways in the best configuration possible to provide the safest, most efficient use of O'Hare airspace.

The configuration of runways that are available for use is based primarily on weather, especially wind direction and strength. In a given runway use configuration, arriving aircraft are assigned to runways based in part on the general direction from the city of origin. This allows air traffic controllers to separate aircraft arrival streams to minimize the crossing of those streams inbound to the airport. By minimizing the crossing of inbound streams, we maximize both the safety and efficiency of O'Hare airspace.

Although the majority of aircraft that utilize the new runway are not wide-body jets, the runway is designed to accept all types of aircraft that currently operate at O'Hare. While daily runway usage varies, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for O'Hare Modernization assumed that, over the course of an average year, about 22% of daytime arrivals would use Runway 27R, with about 78% using other runways. Although the new runway has only been in use for just over a month, preliminary data shows that, as of January 6, about 21% of daytime arrivals have used Runway 27R since it was opened, which is generally consistent with the EIS.

In regard to air traffic control procedural options to minimize noise, while the FAA continually explores procedural ways to reduce airport environmental impacts in general, we are currently employing all available and authorized air traffic control procedures for aircraft arrivals to the new runway.

Your letter also asked the FAA to fund sound insulation for Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School in Park Ridge and Ebinger Elementary School in Chicago. As you may know, O'Hare

area schools are funded based on the "worst first" policy adopted by the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC). The policy ranks schools based on their Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) and their interior Equivalent Sound Level. In other words, the ONCC has asked the FAA to prioritize school sound insulation in order to alleviate the most significant impacts first.

Currently there are two schools on the list—Hitch Elementary and Farnsworth Elementary—with higher DNL levels than Roosevelt. Although we awarded an Airport Improvement Program grant in fiscal year FY-2008 for design of the Hitch school sound insulation, neither school has been soundproofed. In addition, the FAA considers financial assistance for soundproofing in the context of all funding requests nationwide. The FAA will give strong consideration to all schools remaining on the list when funding becomes available. Under the O'Hare School Sound Insulation Program, over $285 million has been spent soundproofing schools around O'Hare.

As you may be aware, on December 18, 2008, I attended a meeting hosted by the Park Ridge City Council, at which numerous comments and questions were voiced by Park Ridge residents and recorded by City Council staff. The FAA has committed to respond to all questions directed to FAA during that meeting, as well as any additional questions the City of Park Ridge or your office may have.

I hope this information is helpful, but if you should need further information on this subject, please feel free to contact me at (847) 294-7294.

Sincerely,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region

Enclosure
Transmitted Correspondence

cc: Washington Office