U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Great Lakes Region
2300 East Devon Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60018

MAR 19 2010

Dear

Thank you for your recent electronic mail message (email) to Randolph Babbitt, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Administrator Babbitt asked me to respond on behalf of the agency.

Your email alluded to concerns regarding new O'Hare Runway 9L/27R, which was completed in November 2008 as part of the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP). The FAA is sensitive to the impacts of airport operations on surrounding communities. Federal agencies that provide funding for transportation infrastructure projects such as the City of Chicago's OMP are required by federal law to conduct a comprehensive environmental analysis of the project and to outline reasonable actions to mitigate environmental impacts.

The FAA completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the OMP in 2005. The EIS was conducted and completed in partnership with a number of Federal, state, and local government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. As part of the EIS process, the FAA sought public input through a number of mechanisms, including a series of public meetings, and all comments received during the EIS process were addressed by FAA and appropriately factored into our agency's final environmental decision. Should you wish to review the EIS and associated documentation, please visit:
http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/eis/.

Aircraft noise is often the most prevalent impact to residents near airports, and the FAA has provided extensive funding throughout the nation to address noise impacts to the greatest extent possible. The FAA has worked with the City of Chicago and the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission to provide over $285 million for school sound insulation, and more than $62 million for residential sound insulation, to address airport related noise impacts. Runway 9L/27R is normally used between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Overnight operations are permitted to a limited extent, as documented in the EIS, but have rarely happened in the 16 months the runway has been operational.

Regarding your concerns about air quality, the EIS analyzed air quality impacts of the OMP. The EIS determined the OMP meets applicable state and federal law regarding emissions and air pollution. The project was determined to be in compliance with Illinois' State Implementation Plan (SIP) and the federal Clean Air Act.

The modernization of O'Hare International Airport is needed to meet Chicago's aviation demands of the future in a manner that provides the greatest degree of safety and efficiency for the airport and the public. Through its analysis of the OMP, the FAA took great care to examine health and safety concerns to ensure that all appropriate impact mitigation actions are taken. While we acknowledge that impacts such as noise cannot be completely eliminated, the FAA has taken significant steps to minimize those impacts, and we will continue to do so as technological advancements in the aviation industry provide those opportunities. Thank you for sharing your perspective with the FAA.

Sincerely,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region