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

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

JUL 0 9 2010

Thank you for your letter dated May 5, 2010 which highlights concerns of Park Ridge residents and offers suggestions for changing operations at O'Hare International Airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been actively engaged in the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) since 2002. I would like to provide you information and background on our responsibilities and activities, direct you to information we have posted on the internet, and respond to your short, medium and long term proposals for O'Hare.

The Federal Aviation Act charges the FAA with providing for a safe and efficient National Airspace System (NAS). O'Hare Airport is a critical part of the NAS and must operate efficiently to meet this Federal mandate. The role of FAA, with regard to the City of Chicago's O'Hare Airport modernization, is to assure that all applicable Federal requirements related to design, construction, and operation are properly applied, and to assure that the environmental impacts of the proposed development are properly assessed, addressed and mitigated.

The FAA completed a very broad, comprehensive technical and environmental analysis of the City's proposal and conducted three separate public hearings at three different locations in the vicinity of O'Hare during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Approximately 200 citizens provided oral testimony during the hearings. Twelve mayors, 35 business leaders, and 6 other public officials gave comment on the EIS. In addition, the FAA received more than 3,500 comments during the EIS process, and responded to all comments. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides multiple opportunities for comment, and the FAA adhered to all procedural requirements as defined by NEPA.

The analysis considered the environmental concerns you raise in your letter. At the time it was approved, the planned OMP met all applicable state and federal regulations and policies, and it continues to do so.

Please refer to the FAA's webpage for the OMP:
http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/
It contains the completed EIS and Record of Decision. It also contains a link to our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and recent correspondence with elected officials and citizens. You will find that we have responded to residents' questions and concerns, which

are similar to many of the concerns raised in the report-back from your Park Ridge town hall on O'Hare.

To specifically address your short, medium and long term proposals, I offer the following:

Short Term: Reroute air traffic away from schools and other residential areas.
The airspace in and around the Chicago metropolitan area is complex, and runway utilization is based on many factors including wind and weather conditions, on-airfield work activities that may affect the availability of runways, and the interrelationship of O'Hare operations with operations at other nearby airports. Under the O'Hare modernization initiative, the City of Chicago proposed a future O'Hare runway configuration that would yield the greatest degree of capacity, efficiency, and safety. In turn, the FAA modeled numerous operating configurations for the future O'Hare with these same capacity, efficiency, and safety priorities in mind. The numerous operating configurations were designed to accommodate changing weather conditions. The runway configuration, and the runway use strategies were studied and ultimately approved under the above-mentioned EIS. While it is certainly acknowledged that O'Hare operations generate noise impacts on nearby residential areas, which exist on all sides of the airport, those impacts were thoroughly analyzed in the EIS. The EIS identified and mandated specific actions to mitigate noise impacts. As a historical point, over 6,900 homes and 114 schools in the vicinity of O'Hare have been soundproofed over the life of Chicago's residential/school sound insulation program. Additionally, the City of Chicago, in 1997, implemented a voluntary "Fly Quiet" program to minimize noise impacts between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. That program is in place and active today.

Regarding your concern about the classification of high school athletic fields as school property vs. parks, I will first clarify that school athletic fields are, in fact, designated as school property, rather than public parks, when their primary function is to support school activities. In regard to the effect of a classification change on air routes and safety, there would be no effect. The arrival and departure routes into and out of O'Hare are designed with all current FAA-required design and operational standards fully applied. Assuming that this concern was in reference to Maine South High School and its proximity to the O'Hare Runway 27R approach path, it is relevant to note that all protected areas required by FAA standards for safe approach to Runway 27R were fully incorporated in the runway design, and those protected areas are located on and adjacent to O'Hare Airport, well to the west of the Maine South property.

Medium Term: Consider congestion pricing and landing slot auctions.
As you may know, the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 eliminated the majority of Federal regulation of domestic routes and services provided by our nation's airlines. While the Federal government does have some limited authority to address airport congestion situations, these situations are driven by a clear lack of capacity for an airport to handle the demand generated by unrestricted airline activity at that airport. This is not currently the case at O'Hare, as O'Hare's airfield is capable of accommodating operations beyond the number of operations occurring there today. You may recall that some congestion management initiatives were employed at O'Hare beginning in 2004, when demand

exceeded airfield capacity at that time, and flight delays were visibly growing. That situation was ultimately remedied by late 2008, in part by a decline in O'Hare operations (a reduction in demand), and in part by the addition of a new O'Hare runway. Should a similar situation (demand exceeding airport capacity) develop in the future, the FAA could consider similar actions, within its authority, to address that situation.

Long term: A supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.
Through the completion of the O'Hare modernization EIS, which was assembled in collaboration with 102 separate Federal, state, and local governmental agencies, the FAA satisfied all requirements for due diligence. The OMP project is being implemented in accordance with the approved EIS, including execution of all specified environmental impact mitigation actions. As stated previously, the EIS did, in fact, anticipate and analyze the impacts outlined in your letter. At this time, the FAA has no basis to initiate a supplemental EIS for the project. Should circumstances develop in the future to warrant environmental re-analysis of any aspect of the project, the FAA will take appropriate action.

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