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

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

JUL 23 2010

Thank you for your letter dated June 13, 2010 with questions and concerns regarding the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) and operations at O'Hare International Airport.

To briefly answer your question regarding who was responsible for determining acceptable runway locations in Chicago, and who viewed/approved these runway locations, Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports are owned and operated by the City of Chicago. Accordingly, the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) is responsible for proposing and developing the configuration of these airports, including runway locations. With that said, the City must also obtain Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) review and approval of any new runways that are proposed and built. Should you wish to contact the CDA, it is located at 10510 W. Zemke Road, Chicago, IL 60666. If your interest is specifically related to aircraft noise issues, the City's noise complaint hotline is 1-800-435-9569.

Concerning FAA review/approval of runways at O'Hare, as I explained to you during our recent telephone conversation, as Regional Administrator of FAA's Great Lakes Region, I am the agency official responsible for decisions made. As you may know, the FAA conducted environmental due diligence in regard to the OMP. This included completing a detailed Environmental Impact statement (EIS) on the OMP proposal, conducting public meetings, soliciting public comments, and publishing our final findings with responses to all comments received. As part of the environmental analysis process, the FAA worked with over 100 federal, state, and local government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). The EIS included a thorough examination of 23 different environmental impact categories, including noise and air quality. The environmental process concluded in September 2005 with the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD) documenting the FAA's approval of the OMP.

The FAA's ROD, and the complete EIS document, are available on our website at: http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/. The EIS contains required actions intended to mitigate, to the greatest extent possible, environmental impacts resulting from airfield development. For instance, the EIS mandates soundproofing of a designated number of homes and schools impacted by aircraft noise. As a point of information, under the City of Chicago's residential and school sound insulation

program, which has been in place for many years, over 6,900 homes and 114 schools in the vicinity of O'Hare have been sound insulated.

Based on the location of the home address you provided in your letter, your home is not aligned with the new O'Hare runway commissioned in 2008 under the OMP, nor is it aligned with any proposed future O'Hare runway. I speculate that the majority of aircraft you may see in proximity to your home are departures from O'Hare Runway 4L, a runway that has existed since O'Hare first opened in 1955. Aircraft departing on Runway 4L follow departure paths that have been in place for many years and have not changed appreciably as a result of new or proposed O'Hare runways. You may also be observing, approximately 2 miles to the south of your home, aircraft arriving on new Runway 27R (the new OMP runway referenced above). As stated previously, the EIS assessed all impacts resulting from that air traffic.

While I clearly appreciate the sincerity of your concerns, our environmental analysis gave full consideration to environmental impacts in accordance with Federal regulations, and we engaged the expertise of other federal, state, and local agencies, including USEPA and IEPA, to ensure the thoroughness and integrity of our analysis. Great care was taken to examine health, safety, and environmental concerns to ensure that all appropriate impact mitigation actions were 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.

I hope that the information provided above helps to clarify for you the work that has been done by the FAA to assess the environmental impacts of O'Hare operations, and the attention that has been devoted specifically to the impacts you highlight in your letter. Thank you for sharing your perspective with me.

Sincerely,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region