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

FEB 04 2011

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

In response to your letter dated October 26, 2010, I would like to answer your primary question and concern: "What measures are being made to mitigate the impact of noise over school athletic fields?"

As I mentioned in previous correspondence dated September 23, 2010, school athletic fields are designated as school property. However, there is a difference between indoor school property, where noise can be mitigated through structural methods, and outdoor school property, where all types of nearby noise can occur, including noise from aircraft engines, highway traffic, and road construction.

School athletic fields, although they are school property, still are classified as outdoor recreational areas, similar to sports arenas, zoos, camps, and golf courses. (Under the Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 150, Appendix A, Table 1, *Land Use Compatibility-With Yearly Day-Night Average Sound Levels*, school athletic fields are not specifically mentioned, however, for the purpose of land use compatibility issues, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) classifies them with other outdoor recreational areas and sports arenas.) For outdoor venues such as these, noise mitigation is pursued, but the FAA and airport operators must balance other significant issues such as operational safety and efficiency.

Like safety and efficiency, noise mitigation is an important investment for the continuing operation of O'Hare Airport. Since 1984, the FAA and the City of Chicago have provided more than $285 million in sound insulation for 116 elementary schools and high schools, including Maine South High School in Park Ridge, so that aircraft noise can be limited inside buildings.

As for outdoor recreational areas such as school athletic fields, breakthroughs in new engine technology, advanced air traffic equipment, and air traffic procedures have helped to reduce aviation noise in communities around O'Hare International Airport.

I have enclosed a chart showing what the 65 day-night average sound level noise contours were in the O'Hare area in 1988 and compared it to the new noise contours 25 years later. There has been a significant reduction in noise and much of this is due to new aviation technologies and procedures. In the coming years, the noise levels will be reduced even further as newer technologies and initiatives are developed.

While balancing noise mitigation efforts with our safety focus and the need for airport efficiency, we are making positive strides to mitigate the impact of aviation noise over community recreational areas such as school athletic fields, sports arenas, and community parks. The results have been encouraging and we will continue with our efforts on the issue.

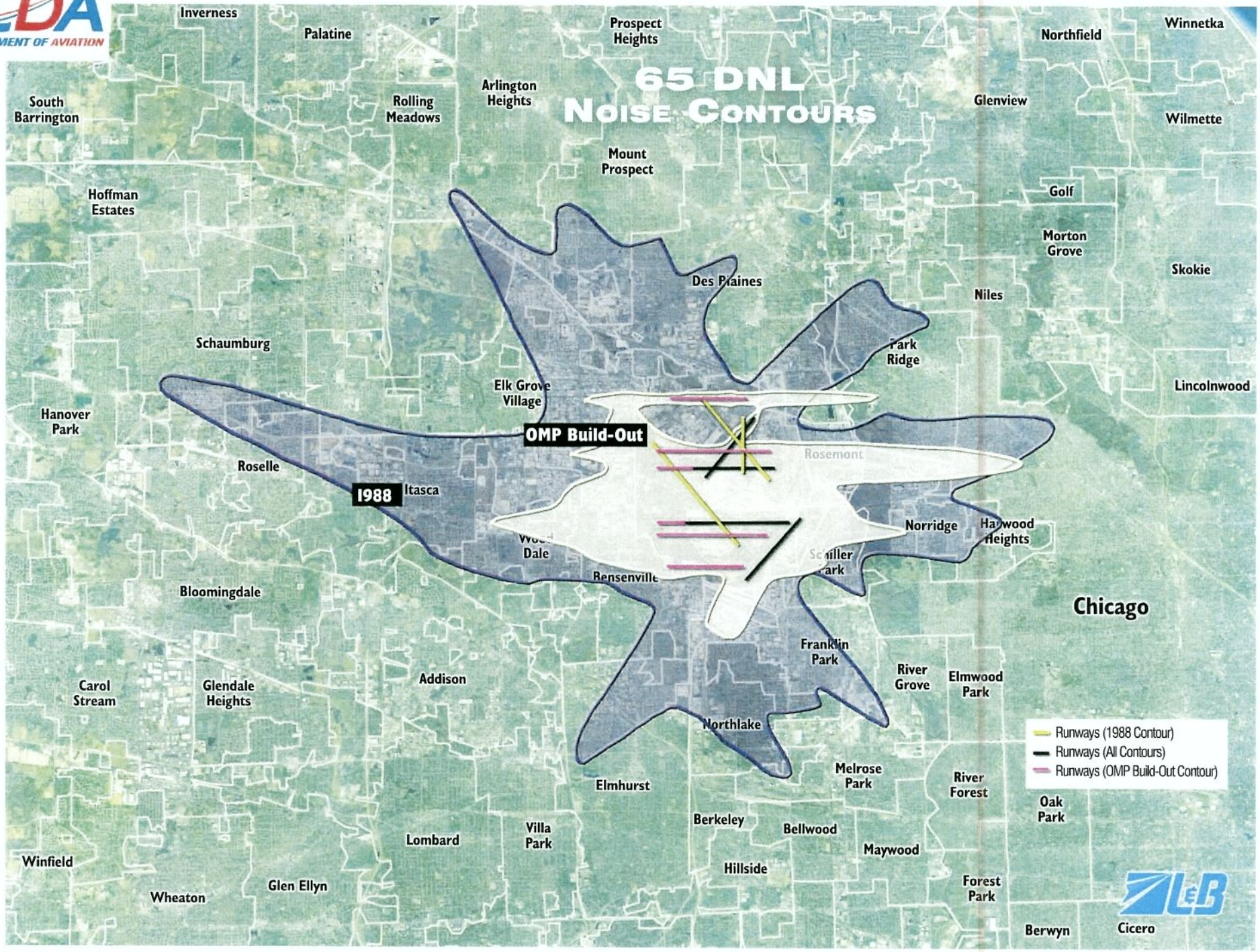
Thank you for sharing your perspective with the FAA.

Sincerely,

Barry D. Cooper
Regional Administrator
Great Lakes Region

Enclosure

Chicago O'Hare International Airport

CHICAGO CDA DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION

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