

Frequently Asked Questions New Runway 9L/27R at Chicago O'Hare International Airport

Runway Usage:

Q: When did the new runway open?

A. The City of Chicago (City) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) opened the new runway with an inaugural flight on Thursday, November 20, 2008. The new runway is 7,500 feet long, 150 feet wide, and is called Runway 9 Left / 27 Right (9L/27R).

Q: Why did O'Hare build a new runway?

A. In 2001 the City announced a major initiative to modernize the airfield at O'Hare International Airport (O'Hare). The Purpose and Need included in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is: to address the project needs of the Chicago region by reducing delays at O'Hare, and thereby enhancing the capacity of the National Airspace System; and ensure that the existing and future terminal facilities and supporting infrastructure can efficiently accommodate airport users. The O'Hare airfield re-orientation requires realignment of three runways, the construction of one new runway, and numerous enabling projects. The City of Chicago's O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) is a multi-year construction program that will conclude by December 31, 2014 (Build-Out). For more information on the OMP, please visit the OMP website on the Internet at www.oharemodernization.org.

Q. Was the OMP analyzed for environmental impacts?

A. Yes. The FAA analyzed the OMP's and the Master Plan Projects' potential environmental impacts for approximately three years, from 2002 to 2005. Public scoping meetings for the FAA EIS were held on August 21-22, 2002. An information meeting was held on August 29, 2002, specifically for the mayors of municipalities surrounding O'Hare. In March 2003, the FAA conducted a public meeting introducing the preliminary purpose and need statement for the EIS. In October 2003, the FAA conducted a working session with invited members of local government to discuss the alternatives for consideration during the EIS process. In order to inform the public of the development of the EIS, the FAA made public on its website the environmental modeling data and other documentation related to the EIS.

The FAA issued the Draft EIS in January 2005, public meetings on the Draft EIS were held on February 22-24, 2005, and the Final EIS was issued in July 2005. On September 30, 2005, the FAA issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for O'Hare Modernization. Information on the FAA's analysis of the OMP and Master Plan Projects can be found on the Internet at:

www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airport_development/omp.

In addition, the FAA gave briefings on the development of the EIS for OMP to the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) at ONCC meetings on February 7, 2003, June 4, 2004, January 25, 2005, and June 3, 2005.

Q: How many flights are arriving on runway 9L/27R?

A: As the airport operator, the City determines which runways are open and available for use by the airlines and the air traffic controllers. The FAA utilizes these runways based on airfield, air traffic, and weather conditions, all of which cause the number of aircraft utilizing individual runways to vary every day. The FAA's EIS assumed that in Build-Out conditions the average annual day arrival count for Runway 27R would be 326. This is an average count, and it was assumed that some days would experience more or less arrivals, due to prevailing winds, aircraft demand, and weather conditions.

The FAA's forecast used in the EIS assumed that operational levels at O'Hare would be higher than what are currently being experienced. Due to the decrease in actual operation levels, the arrivals occurring on Runway 27R are currently less than what was assumed in the EIS.

Q: Isn't this runway only supposed to be used only during bad weather?

A: Runway 9L/27R is considered an all-weather runway. O'Hare will receive the greatest benefits of the new runway during bad weather conditions by allowing air traffic controllers to utilize a third east-west parallel runway for aircraft arrivals. In order to maintain a safe and efficient airspace, the FAA utilizes all seven of O'Hare's current runways as needed depending on airfield, air traffic, and weather conditions, as well as noise abatement restrictions (see below).

Q: When will this runway be used?

A: During the day the runway will be used for simultaneous triple parallel approaches during all weather conditions. The runway is anticipated to be used infrequently at night. The City's nighttime noise abatement program, called the Fly Quiet Program, does not include the new runway as a preferential nighttime runway.

Q: What aircraft types are using Runway 9L/27R?

A: Runway 9L/27R can accommodate aircraft as large as Boeing 747s. Regional jets, MD-80s, Airbus 319s and 320s, and Boeing 737s and 757s are using the runway routinely.

Aircraft Noise and Noise Monitoring:

Q: If I live north or south of the new runway, why am I hearing aircraft noise?

A: There are many variables that would increase the noise levels around your home, depending on the aircraft fleet mix, your home's proximity to the new runway's flight path, weather, altitude, and other factors. A typical noise "footprint" for any individual aircraft utilizing O'Hare airfield covers an area on the ground between 5 and 45 square miles, depending on the specific aircraft.

Q. What is a noise contour?

A. Noise contours depict levels of aircraft noise surrounding an airport. The FAA analyzed noise impacts for the OMP in the EIS using established aviation industry methods. The noise contour developed for the OMP for build-out conditions is called the Build-Out Noise Contour. The noise contour is used for land use compatibility and noise exposure and mitigation purposes. The Build-Out Noise Contour was approved on September 30, 2005, as part of the ROD.

Q. What is the 65 DNL?

A. As FAA's primary metric for aviation noise analysis, the FAA has determined that the cumulative noise energy exposure of individuals to noise resulting from aviation activities must be established in terms of the day-night average sound level (DNL) in decibels (dB). The 65 DNL is the Federal significance threshold for aircraft noise exposure.

Q: Is there a permanent noise monitor located to capture noise events?

A: Since 1996 the City has utilized the Airport Noise Management System (ANMS) to monitor the amount of noise being generated over the communities surrounding O'Hare by the aircraft operating at the airport. The ANMS collects, analyzes, and processes data from a number of sources of information including a network of 30 noise monitors near O'Hare, FAA radar data, weather data, and telephone calls to the City's noise hotline. On average, over 120,000 flights and 400,000 noise events are recorded by the ANMS each month for the Chicago Airport System.

Sound Insulation:

Q: Does my home qualify for sound insulation?

A: When the FAA issued the ROD, the ROD identified the 65 DNL Build-Out Noise Contour as the noise contour to be used for sound insulation purposes. Each home must also meet additional eligibility criteria as established by the City and the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission.

For more information, please call the City's Residential Inquiry Line at 773.894.3255 or visit the Property Locator on the City's website at <http://maps.cityofchicago.org/aviation>.

Q: Will the eligibility criteria for the RSIP ever change?

A: When the OMP is complete, the FAA has directed the City to prepare a new noise contour reflecting the aircraft noise impacts surrounding O'Hare for the fifth year after Build Out. If the new noise contour includes any additional homes inside the 65 DNL, these homes will become eligible for sound insulation. The City will contact those homeowners at that time.

Q: Is there anything I can do on my own to alleviate the noise in my home?

A: The City believes that noise management is an important issue for the communities surrounding O'Hare and works on aircraft noise management issues daily. As a result, the City prepared a "Sound Insulating Your Home" booklet to outline some available options that you can implement in your home to decrease the effects of aircraft noise. This booklet is available for homeowners surrounding the airport who are not eligible to participate in the Residential Sound Insulation Program. To download a copy of the booklet, please visit the Chicago Airport System website at www.flychicago.com and click on Environment.

Information Resources/Noise Complaints:

City's Residential Inquiry Line: 773.894.3255

City's Noise Complaint Hotline: 1.800.435.9569 (rolls over to Chicago 311)

FAA's Great Lakes Regional Noise Line: 847.294.7373

Chicago Airport System website: www.flychicago.com

O'Hare Modernization Program website: www.oharemodernization.org

O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission website: www.oharenoise.org

FAA's O'Hare Modernization website: www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airport_development/omp