

For Immediate Release
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FAA Speeds up environmental review of O'Hare project...

Mayor Richard M. Daley announced today that the Federal Aviation Administration has accelerated its environmental review of the O'Hare International Airport modernization project and said he hoped construction could begin this summer.

Daley said the FAA's draft of its Environmental Impact Statement will be made public Thursday (Jan. 13). It had been scheduled to be released in February.

"This means that public hearings can begin in late February, rather than in March, as originally scheduled," Daley said. "It moves us closer to accomplishing our goal of dramatically improving the nation's busiest airport."

Daley said the FAA had planned to issue its final decision on the project in September, "and we now hope it will come even earlier. If that decision is favorable - and we fully expect it will be - we intend to break ground on the O'Hare modernization project the following day."

Rosemarie Andolino, Executive Director of the O'Hare Modernization Program, said the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is "the most comprehensive level of review for an airport project."

She said it measures the purpose and need of the program, reasonable alternatives to the program, as well as environmental impacts that could result from the proposed project. The review process also includes extensive input from other regulatory agencies, input from the public on the draft EIS and a comment period on the Final EIS.

Daley said he is "confident we have put together a program that will create 21st century airport that respects the environment."

The modernized O'Hare is expected to reduce bad weather delays by 95 percent and overall delays by 79 percent, saving tremendous amounts of time and fuel.

"Automobile traffic will move to and from the airport much more efficiently," Daley said. "Our program addresses quality-of-life issues for those who live near the airport - both in the city and in the suburbs."

The modernized O'Hare is expected to create an estimated 195,000 jobs, in addition to the 500,000 jobs currently supported by the region's airport system. It is expected to generate some \$18 billion a year in increased economic activity.

The Mayor thanked President Bush; Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta; and FAA Administrator Marian Blakey, for their assistance in moving the process forward.

He also thanked the members of the Chicago business community; organized labor; regional mayors and business people; and the members of the Illinois congressional delegation who have been working on the program since it was announced in 2001.