

The City Newsletter

Elmhurst

September 2001

Special Edition



O'Hare Airport Expansion

Chicago's Mayor Daley recently unveiled a massive and costly O'Hare expansion plan, calling for new terminals, new access roads and a new system of six parallel runways. After years of denying that O'Hare needed more capacity, Mayor Daley finally admitted under pressure that O'Hare needs even more new runways than previously planned. Daley's plans include extensive residential and business relocations, vaguely described new ring roads, and new terminals, taxiways and other "landside" improvements. These would be in addition to the \$3.6 billion terminal project known as "World Gateway." The entire project could exceed \$15 billion, making it one of the most costly public works projects in the nation's history.

How will the expansion plan affect the communities surrounding O'Hare?

- An increase in flights over Elmhurst and neighboring communities from the current 900,000 to a mind-boggling 1.6 million, along with an increased threat to on-ground safety, and a massive increase in noise and air pollution (from what is already the state's largest single source of air pollution).
- Erosion of property values and area tax base, as our quality of life and the

quality of our schools, parks and library are threatened.

- A huge waste of taxpayers' money, close to three times the cost of building an entirely new south suburban airport.
- Destruction of hundreds of homes and businesses in neighboring communities, increasing the tax burden on remaining residents and business owners, and harming taxing bodies outside the boundaries of those communities.

Will the expanded O'Hare continue to affect Elmhurst?

You will notice from the map of the new O'Hare runway configuration that two diagonal runways will still be pointed in Elmhurst's direction. These are the same runways that generate the noise many of us in Elmhurst hear today. These runways will remain in place and, with the addition of 700,000 more flights a year (a 77 percent increase), Elmhurst and every other nearby community will have more flights overhead, more noise and more air pollution. Even when the diagonal runways are not in use, the additional traffic using the east-west parallel runways will force more departing flights to turn over Elmhurst and other communities.

Chicago is now trying to split the O'Hare communities by suggesting that some suburbs will experience less noise under the

new plan. Remember that these are the same people who claim that Elmhurst does not qualify for noise abatement because Elmhurst is not a noise-impacted community.

Why won't Mayor Daley's plan work?

The plan is doomed from the start. To attempt to build what should be a 23,000-acre airport on the site of the 7,000-acre O'Hare Airport, *while the airport is operating*, is folly. Many of us remember the traffic nightmares from the three-year reconstruction of the Kennedy Expressway. Now imagine an airport project that will take up to two decades to finish, cost \$15 billion or more, and with no alternative sites for air traffic. Unlike the Kennedy reconstruction, where motorists had alternative streets to take during construction, the only alternative for the airlines will be to redirect their air traffic to other cities, causing a significant loss to the Chicago region's economy.

The key to Daley's plan is the construction of *six* parallel east-west runways – an unprecedented and untested airport design. One might expect such a massive proposal for an airport with a large "footprint," such as Dallas-Fort Worth, or the 23,000-acre airport planned for the south suburbs south of Crete and north of Peotone. But O'Hare's 7,000 acres is constrained by communities whose

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boundaries run right up to the airport's fence line. There simply is no room for this kind of experimentation.

Two pairs of the runways will be separated by only 1,200 feet, a distance so close as to possibly foil plans for simultaneous landings and takeoffs on the side-by-side runways. Such an unproven and expensive design leaves in serious question claims that the airport will be able to handle the region's air traffic demands decades from now. At best, Daley's plan will not allow the kind of expandability that a larger south suburban airport would offer. At worst, the expanded O'Hare will prove to be one of the nation's biggest boondoggles.

No matter how much money Daley and the airlines pour into O'Hare, it will never have the kind of community and environmental "buffers" that are standard for modern airports, including the proposed South Suburban Airport. At O'Hare, our community will always remain the buffer, for noise, air pollution and, most frighteningly, safety.

How will the creation of a third regional airport be beneficial?

- Relieve the tremendous airside, roadside and landside burdens being placed on an airport that has far exceeded its planned capacity.
- Reduce delays for both passengers and airfreight, and reduce costs for airfreight and time-sensitive business travelers.
- Create permanent full-time jobs and temporary construction jobs for areas south of O'Hare and help provide economic justice for *all* Chicago region residents.
- Expand our tax base by bringing businesses to Illinois instead of to cities where reserve airport capacity still exists, such as Milwaukee, Denver, Detroit and Atlanta.

A Message from Mayor Marcucci

We are unified. We are absolutely and totally committed to each other. For years, we have fought for solutions for those most injured by O'Hare and Chicago's expansion plan. We all know that some people in our community are more seriously impacted than others, but we have a tradition of fighting

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Area Map



for each other. Those of us who have been in Elmhurst for a few years remember how the community pulled together following the flood of 1987.

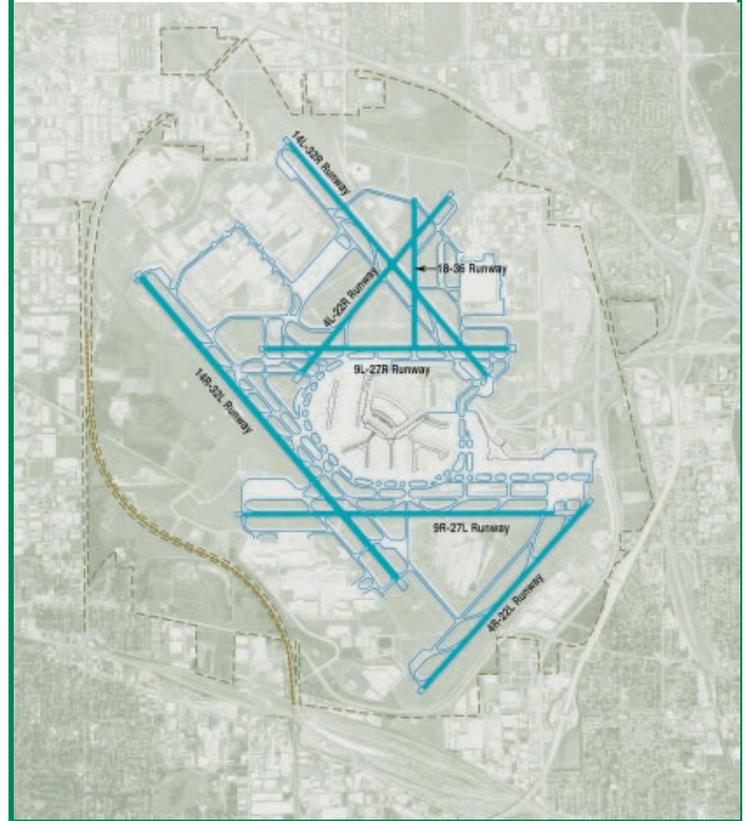
Our commitment is not just to each other in Elmhurst, but to those who would be devastated in the worst way by O'Hare expansion plans. Chicago is trying to break up this commitment. We keep hearing of folks from different places getting calls from downtown – from Chicago's City Hall, from airline or business interests – saying that Elmhurst or some other community is "saved" under Mayor Daley's new plan. The not-too-subtle hint is that we can stop fighting, because we'll be all right under the plan; that we should let the others who are going to be hurt the worst carry on this futile fight against the inevitable.

There are some important things wrong about this deceptive logic:

- Elmhurst isn't "saved." A vastly expanded O'Hare is not in our best interest. More flights mean more discomfort, even misery for some of our fellow citizens. And the promised economic development? O'Hare will always be



Existing Runways



there; we're for a strong and vital airport—but one that won't self-destruct by foolish plans to choke it with more growth than the airport or our communities can handle. Studies show that with a major new south suburban airport, *everyone* benefits – not just the people in the south suburbs, but the region as a whole, by keeping the Chicago area competitive with other major airport hubs.

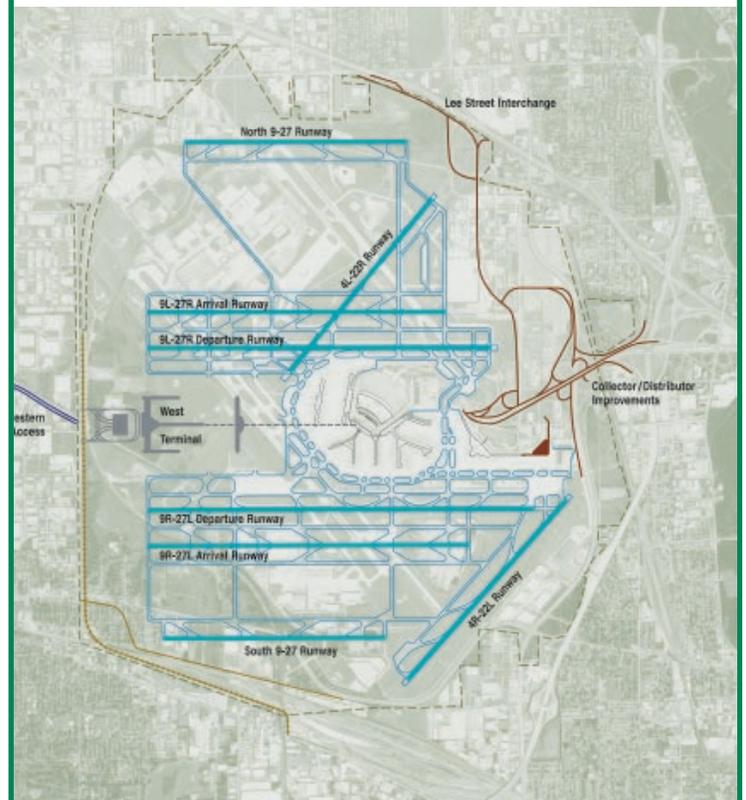
- The communities most impacted by O'Hare have been effective because they have always stood strong and united. Chicago, the airlines and some self-serving business interests clearly have adopted a political and public relations strategy of "divide and conquer." They chip away at one community with a promise of a road and chip away at another community with a pledge of "having a place at the table" when the final deal is made. We can see the consequences for some communities that have been lulled into complacency. For their cooperation, they now have six runways pointed in their direction.
- There is nothing "inevitable" about Daley's plan or any part of it. We have beaten O'Hare expansion plans before and we will do it again. In the early 1990's Mayor Daley proposed his Lake Calumet plan. It fell flat on its face, partly because of political opposition, but mostly because it would have been built on top of a century-old toxic dump and because it would have displaced entire Chicago neighborhoods, forced the closing of Midway airport and caused other massive problems. It collapsed of its own weight, just as Daley's similarly ill-conceived plans to vastly expand O'Hare will collapse. We must constantly remind political and corporate decision-makers and the media that Daley's plans are not in the local, regional, state or even national interest. If we fail, it won't be only Elmhurst that will pay the price. It will be every taxpayer who pays for this boondoggle; it will be every air traveler whose life is made even more miserable by Daley's unworkable plans; and it will be everyone in the Chicago region, whose economy will fail to reach its full potential under Daley's short-sighted plan.

The Role of the Suburban O'Hare Commission

The Suburban O'Hare Commission (SOC) is a consortium of local governments from communities surrounding O'Hare International Airport formed in 1981. The City of Elmhurst has been an active and involved member of SOC since its formation. SOC's goal is to ensure that O'Hare operations are consistent with the health, safety and quality of life in surrounding communities. For the 19 years of its existence, SOC has been able to prevent runway expansion at O'Hare, has obtained millions of dollars for soundproofing schools and has forced the City of Chicago to alter its noise measurement standards to more accurately reflect the impact of flights on particular areas. While SOC members recognize the economic value of O'Hare and air transportation in general, they believe that O'Hare has been allowed to grow well beyond an appropriate



Proposed Runways



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size and flight volume. This has resulted in unacceptable levels of noise, toxic air pollution and safety hazards for residents of surrounding communities. To combat these conditions, SOC



supports two simple goals. The first is the construction of a new south suburban airport to operate in conjunction with O'Hare and Midway as part of a regional airport system. The second goal is to stop further expansion at

O'Hare. Although SOC has accomplished significant things in the past 19 years, there is crucial work just ahead now that the City of Chicago's expansion plan is finally on the table.

Who's fighting for us and what can I do?

SOC has the support of Governor Ryan, U.S. Senator Peter Fitzgerald, U. S. Representative Henry Hyde, Illinois Senate President James "Pate" Philip and House Minority Leader Lee Daniels. They need you to strengthen their resolve and send a clear message of "NO NEW RUNWAYS AT O'HARE" to other

elected officials and to the City of Chicago. The O'Hare expansion plan can be defeated but it will require a strong, united effort. This is what you can do to help:

- Write letters to elected officials opposing the O'Hare expansion plan and supporting the third regional airport;
- Attend citizen rallies against O'Hare expansion and invite your neighbors to join you;
- Put a sign in your yard or window and talk to your neighbors about the effects O'Hare expansion will have on our community and your neighborhood;
- Call SOC at (630) 860-7101 or send e-mail to info@suburban-ohare.org to volunteer to make calls, distribute literature or help in other ways.
- Call the O'Hare Noise Hot Line (800-435-9569) when noise and pollution from O'Hare adversely impact the quality of your life;

Check out SOC's web page at www.suburban-ohare.org or link through the City's home page at www.elmhurst.org for more information. The SOC web page contains links to the addresses, phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses of federal and state officials and local media, so you can make your voice heard.

If we stay strong and unified, we can protect our communities.



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