

April 25, 2001

Dear Editor:

The Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare opposes the use of Advanced Flight Track Procedures, (Advance Flight Management System) and other such equipment for sound abatement, because it effectively increases the number of flights and continuously runs the flights over the same residents and communities.

We find it ironic that the head of Chicago's Noise Commission program and the mayor of Arlington Heights, Arlene Mulder, is trumpeting the Flight Management System and similar programs for Chicago and the airlines. Mulder is quoted as saying "I certainly hope that those flight paths become designated flight pathsⁱ." She and Arlington Heights have been among the loudest proponents of equally shared runway use. As they correctly point out, their community lies under the approach and departure tracks of O'Hare's longest runway and its neighboring parallel runway, causing the greatest number of flights over the area. And, correctly stated, Arlington's O'Hare Advisory Committee is especially critical of Chicago, since relatively few flights are directed over the city proper, even though it is the city's airport. Arlington Heights and Chicago's proposal does not equally distribute the noise over the 12 major runway ends; it disproportionately sends the noise, pollution and safety problems over the same neighborhoods.

There are many problems with the system as promoted by the Village of Arlington Heights, Chicago and the airlines. First, FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) documents show that Flight Management system's main purpose is to increase in the number of flights and reduce fuel costs.ⁱⁱ⁻ⁱⁱⁱ

Chicago O'Hare claims they are using the system to operate airplanes over sparsely populated areas at night. But a check of an area map will show that no matter in which direction a plane is flown, it will awaken thousands of people out of REM sleep. The resulting lack of good night's rest is harmful to airport neighbors' health, reduces productivity, and contributes to accidents, etc.

FMS increases and concentrates noise and deadly pollution over the same people and the same communities, and will further negatively impact their health, quality of life, residential property values, etc. In many cases, the Arlington Heights preferred runway use plan directs the flights over the neighboring communities that are most vocal about O'Hare noise and expansion.

It is well-established that flight track changes to reduce noise simply do not work properly for many reasons: It is a temporary appeasement at best, the maneuvers lower pilot/aircraft safety, the round-about procedures use extra fuel, the tracks change as additional flights are added, they change with wind velocity and direction change, they lose time. Besides, when the airlines and Chicago O'Hare get what they want, airport expansion, they will go back to what flight tracks are the most expedient, at the best-cost savings while providing a reasonable margin of safety.

The real purpose of FMS is to add more flights to O'Hare. Secondly, Chicago's ultimate scheme is to fly planes over the same neighbors and communities, by lowering the total number of people that are affected, simply to reduce the airport's noise contour, thus reducing its liabilities.

What can work to reduce the nighttime roar of O'Hare's noise to safe, healthy levels is the reduction of flights and adherence to a global, nighttime curfew as is done at other world-class cities.

Also, the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare supports community-sharing programs similar to those at world-class airports around the world. This would reduce the number of flights over Arlington Heights and other Northwest and Western suburbs tremendously. If everyone wants to share the wealth, they must also share the burdens. After all, with the new technology, it is now possible to let all the communities, including downtown Chicago, get the O'Hare onslaught on an equitably managed basis.

Thank you.

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ⁱ Daily Herald. Apr. 28, 1999.

ⁱⁱ Human Factors of FMS Usage in the Terminal Area (1997). The Terminal Radar Approach (TRACON) requires accurate estimation of trajectories to provide useful, efficient traffic advisories and accurately predicts arrival times of aircraft in its system. As FMS provides these trajectories directly to aircraft in flight, the benefits realized are enhanced fuel efficiency coupled with reduced delays.

ⁱⁱⁱ AAR News, FAA's Office of Aviation Research (Dec. 1996). The aim of the demonstrations is to validate the technologies aimed at increasing capacity in the European airspace through the application of advanced ground controller displays and automated tools, airborne tools (e.g., the Enhanced Flight System), and datalink.