STATEMENT

OF

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VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS AND
CHAIRPERSON, O'HARE NOISE COMPATIBILITY COMMISSION

ON

AVIATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: "NOISE"

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2007
11:00A.M.
2167 RAYBURN HOB

BEFORE

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

OCTOBER 24, 2007

Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and members of the Subcommittee. Good morning to all of you. It is my pleasure and privilege to be with you today.

I am here today with you representing the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission, which is a consortium of communities and school districts in the O'Hare area that works on meaningful methods of reducing the impact of aircraft noise around O'Hare International Airport.

I am also the Mayor of Arlington Heights, Illinois, a community of nearly 80,000 residents, located directly northwest of O'Hare International Airport.

As a community in close proximity to O'Hare, Arlington Heights has been concerned with the impact of aircraft noise for many years. In 1991, we were the first suburb of Chicago to take an active role in monitoring jet noise and addressing noise-related issues. In direct response to these issues, we formed the Arlington Heights Advisory Committee on O'Hare Noise, which continues to counsel the Arlington Heights Village Board. I was the first Chairperson of that committee and I continue to be very active in addressing aircraft noise issues as Chairperson of the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) since 1997.

By way of background, the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission was formed in November 1996 on an invitation by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley in order to develop constructive ways for suburbs and school districts to work more effectively with the Chicago Department of Aviation, the FAA, the Air Traffic Controllers, the airlines pilots and other stakeholders in the aviation industry on aircraft noise reduction in communities around O'Hare Airport.

As a result of Mayor Daley's vision and the ongoing commitment of our members, all of the work of the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission is a matter of public record and open meetings. We believe in collaboration, not confrontation. We do our work in the boardroom, not the courtroom.

The members of the ONCC are locally elected officials and appointed representatives of suburban communities. These people, who are not paid for their service to the commission, live and work in the suburbs affected by aircraft noise.

The 42 Municipal and School District members of this Commission endeavor to balance the regional economic engine that is O'Hare and the quality of life issues that are vital to the residents living near the airport.

The ONCC also understands that reducing aircraft noise cannot be accomplished with the flip of a switch. It is an evolutionary process that results in subtle day-to-day progress, but over time produces significant, measurable outcomes.

The ONCC works primarily through three standing committees.

The Technical Committee examines and promotes the use of cutting edge technologies and procedures aimed at reducing aircraft noise at its source.

The ONCC's other two standing committees are concerned with reducing noise at its points of impact, specifically schools and homes.

The School Sound Insulation program is the world's largest. To date, over $285 million have been spent on effectively sound insulating schools around O'Hare, with 114 now completed.

By the end of the 2006 program year, the O'Hare Residential Sound Insulation Committee will have directed the insulation of more than 6,100 homes at an average cost of $30,000 each, totaling over $180 million.

The O'Hare Residential and School Sound Insulation Programs are currently funded through FAA Airport Improvement Program grants at 80%, and City of Chicago Passenger Facility Charges at 20%.

The FAA is now the primary funder of the O'Hare Residential Sound Insulation Program as the FAA required mitigation in the Record of Decision for the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP). For the first 5,900 single-family homes that were sound-insulated from 1996-2004, the City of Chicago funded that Program entirely with PFC revenues. The ONCC and residents in surrounding communities who have benefited from this Program are extremely grateful.

Another step O'Hare communities are taking to mitigate aircraft noise is to update land use planning to reduce non-compatible land uses and head off introduction of new uses not compatible with the airport's modernization. Due to the FAA's funding and the community's planning, the City of Des Plaines, IL was awarded a $750,000 federal Land Use Compatibility Grant to upgrade zoning ordinances and industrial design standards and conduct studies to determine how O'Hare's new contours will affect the city.

As the City of Chicago continues its aggressive noise mitigation efforts at O'Hare and Midway Airports, the ONCC supports the City of Chicago's efforts to obtain a substantial increase in the AIP Noise Set Aside as well as FAA discretionary grants for Midway and O'Hare sound insulation projects. We commend the Aviation Committee and House of Representatives for significant AIP dollar increases in the new FAA Reauthorization Bill.

The ONCC also agrees with the position of many airports across the country, including the Chicago Airport System, to give them the ability to increase the Passenger Facility Charge rate ceiling and provide airports flexibility in that rate-setting.

It is also important for the members of this panel and the general public to understand that the ONCC is not for or against the City of Chicago on airport development issues, including the O'Hare Modernization Program.

What all the members of the ONCC, including the city of Chicago, share is concern for the impact of aircraft noise on residents. All of our members, regardless of their individual positions on the O'Hare Modernization Program or other airport-related issues, are dedicated to finding the most effective ways to reduce aircraft noise.

The ONCC is now working with renewed enthusiasm and a new mandate. We have been given specific responsibilities concerning aircraft noise mitigation as O'Hare is being redeveloped. When the O'Hare Modernization Program was first announced, the ONCC pledged to be involved in the FAA's Environmental Impact Statement process every step of the way. We kept that promise and made constructive suggestions on aircraft noise issues throughout the process.

Now the ONCC has an important role as the O'Hare Modernization Program moves forward. For the first time, we have the opportunity to sound-insulate homes before aircraft noise arrives. The OMP also provides a new framework to explore revised aircraft flight procedures that have the potential to reduce aircraft noise significantly over residential areas, especially at night.

The ONCC strongly commends the Federal Aviation Administration for thoroughly defining environmental goals in the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen).

Through NextGen, we realize that the FAA will be able to substantively address the impacts of air traffic growth by increasing National Air System capacity while addressing quality of life impacts at the same time. The FAA will be able to implement new procedures that enhance emerging aircraft navigation capabilities, including performance-based navigation, which will assist the FAA in achieving various NextGen goals.

With initiatives and projects like NextGen, the ONCC can continue advocating for additional funding for technological approaches to aircraft noise mitigation, such as NASA's quiet engine technology research and advanced flight track procedures like RNAV, or Area Navigation. The procedures developed follow the preferential nighttime flight tracks that were designed to navigate aircraft towards areas of more compatible land use, such as forest preserves, highway corridors and industrial areas. The use of this technology will automatically compensate for wind drift and air speed while ensuring airspace safety, efficiency, and when possible, minimizing the noise impacts to surrounding residences.

NextGen also addresses another cutting-edge approach procedure, called Continuous Descent Approach (CDA). This technology reduces noise by allowing pilots to fly steeper, computer-driven runway approaches. The ONCC highly commends the FAA for working towards implementation of CDA at airports throughout the country.

Many of the above initiatives are described in the "Aviation and the Environment" Report, which I participated in two years ago. The ONCC is a member of the advisory committee of the Partnership for Air Transportation Noise and Emission Reduction, which prepared the Report.

I speak for all ONCC members in saying that we welcome the challenges ahead and the opportunity to continue serving the residents of the O'Hare region, cooperatively and collaboratively.

As we move forward into the future, the ONCC will continue its role in aircraft noise mitigation and will remain focused on enhancing the quality of life in communities around O'Hare.

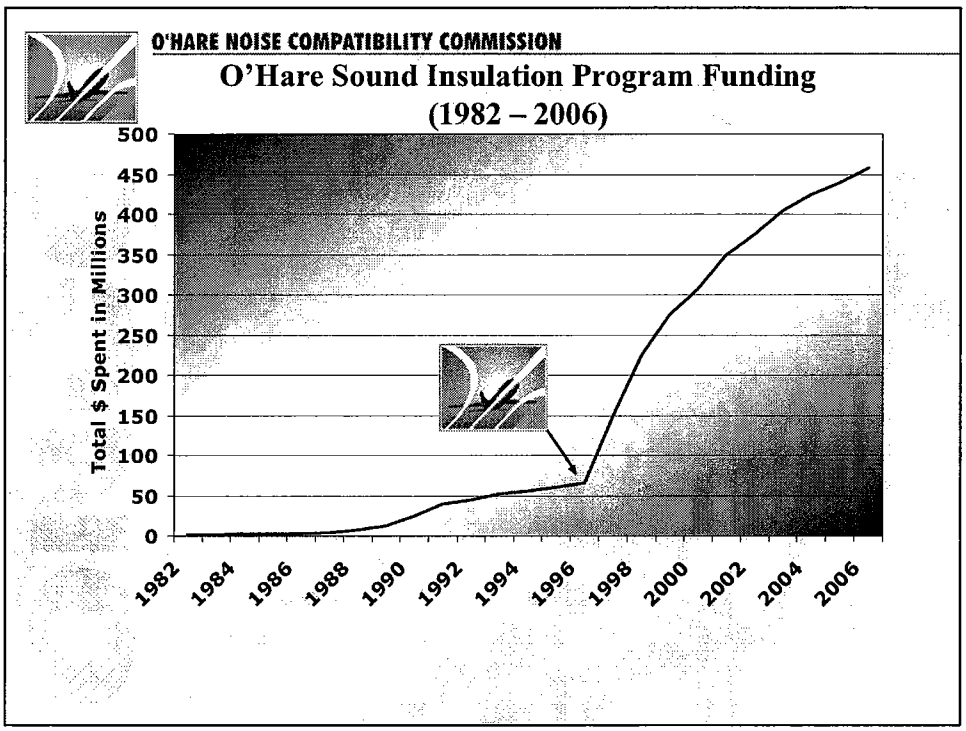
The ONCC stresses that Congress must continue to support groups like ours that promote open dialogue, accessibility to information, and forums for the exchange of viewpoints on noise impacts, alternatives, and mitigation.

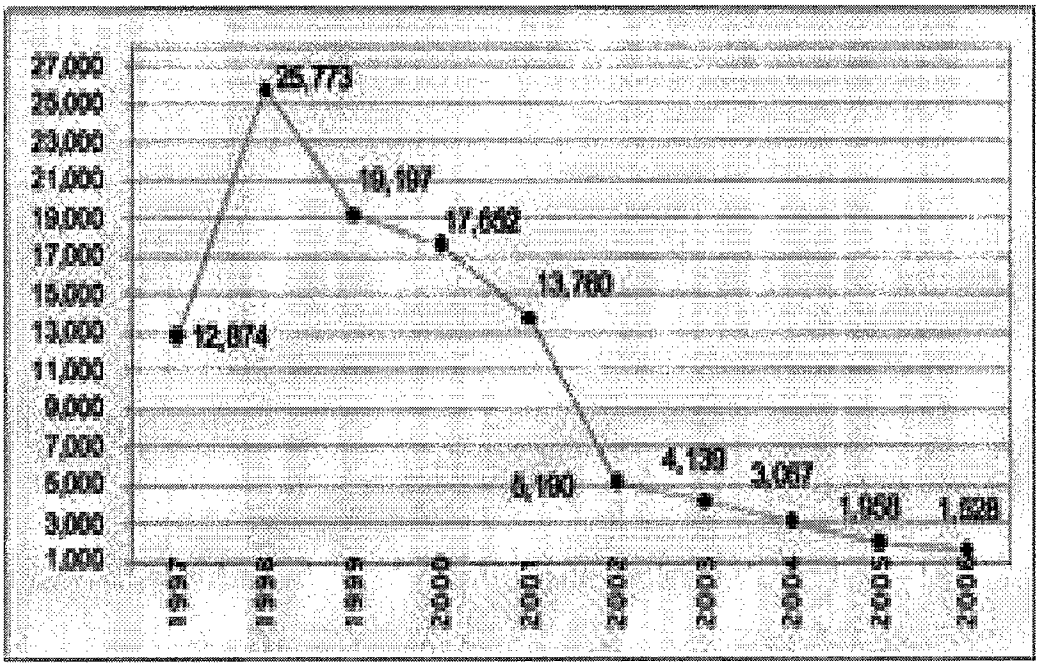
The ONCC urges you to consider quality of life issues along with airport efficiency and safety. Obviously, we all agree that safety is the top priority.

The ONCC will continue to address the aircraft noise issues that exist today around O'Hare. We urge the members of this Committee to remain concerned with everyone who must live and learn in homes and schools around America's airports today and well into the future.

Thank you very much. I look forward to any questions you may have.

Appendices


O'HARE NOISE COMPATIBILITY COMMISSION
O'Hare Sound Insulation Program Funding
(1982 – 2006)
Total $ Spent in Millions
500
450
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
2002
2004
2006

Proposed FAA Priorities
SAFETY
Noise Reduction
Efficiency

O'Hare Noise Complaints (1997 to 2006)