

Frequently Asked Questions

New Runway 9C/27C

Chicago O'Hare International Airport



Runway Usage:

Q1. When will the new runway open?

A1. The City of Chicago (City) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) expect to commission the new runway on November 5, 2020. The new runway is 11,245 feet long, 200 feet wide, and is called Runway 9C/27C (9 Center / 27 Center).

Q2. Why is O'Hare building a new runway?

A2. In 2001 the City announced a major initiative to modernize the airfield at Chicago 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 is anticipated to conclude by 2021 (Build-Out). Runway 9C/27C will be the first new runway commissioned at the airport since October 2015.

Q3. Was the OMP analyzed for environmental impacts?

A3. 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 about the FAA's analysis of the OMP and Master Plan Projects can be found on the Internet at http://www.faa.gov/airports/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.

In 2015 the FAA completed a Written Re-Evaluation of the EIS to evaluate changes associated with the airfield construction schedule modification that altered the timing for commissioning new Runway 10R/28L, new Runway 9C/27C, and the extension of Runway 9R/27L. The runways and extension were included in the original EIS, but are scheduled for different completion dates than those in the original EIS.

In July 2019 the FAA completed a Written Re-Evaluation of the EIS for the Interim Fly Quiet Runway Rotation Plan (IFQ). The IFQ will occur during two periods between November 2019 and January 2021.

Q4. Where is the new runway located on the airfield, and in relation to O'Hare's surroundings?

A4. On the north airfield, approximately 1,600 feet north of existing Runway 9R/27L (as measured from centerline to centerline).

Runway Usage:

Q5. How will the new runway be utilized?

A5. Mostly as an arrival runway in all weather and wind conditions, and also as a departure runway when operationally necessary.

Q6. When will this runway be used?

A6. The runway will initially be used for simultaneous dual parallel approaches, and later be used for simultaneous triple parallel approaches during all weather conditions during the daytime. The new runway will also be used when operationally necessary at night during and after completion of the IFQ in January 2021.

Q7. What aircraft types will use Runway 9C/27C?

A7. Runway 9C/27C will be an Airplane Design Group (ADG) VI runway. It will be able to accommodate all aircraft that fly today, including the B747-8 and A380.

Q8. Is this the last runway project associated with the O'Hare Modernization Program?

A8. Runway 9C/27C is the last of the new runways that will open as part of the O'Hare Modernization Program. Existing Runway 9R/27L is undergoing an extension of 3,293 feet that will continue into next year. Runway 9R/27L will have a total length of 11,260 feet when its extension is complete in December 2021.

Nighttime Flights:

Q9. What is the Fly Quiet Program and how does it affect nighttime flights?

A9. On June 17, 1997, the City, in cooperation with the ONCC, the user airlines, and the FAA, implemented the Fly Quiet Program at O'Hare. The program consists of a series of voluntary noise abatement flight and operating procedures designed to reduce the impact of aircraft noise during the nighttime hours from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The three main elements of the Fly Quiet Program are: 1.) preferential runway use; 2.) arrival and departure flight procedures; and 3.) aircraft engine ground run-up procedures. For details about the current Fly Quiet Program, including the Fly Quiet Program manual and quarterly reports, please visit the City's website at: <https://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/FlyQuiet/Pages/default.aspx>

As stated in the 2005 Record of Decision for the O'Hare Modernization, "At this point it is not reasonable to either assume that there would be a new Fly Quiet Program or speculate what a new Fly Quiet Program would be. FAA will, however, give consideration to suggestions for changes in the Fly Quiet Program developed by the ONCC and requested of the FAA by the City of Chicago. It is FAA's understanding that it is the City of Chicago's intent to continue the existing Fly Quiet Program, except as affected by runway decommissioning. The Fly Quiet Program will be modified by ONCC in the future only if needed; such modification would be done in consultation with the FAA and the City of Chicago Department of Aviation. Modification requiring FAA action would be subsequent to its prior approval, and any necessary environmental review."

Aircraft Noise and Noise Monitoring:

Q10. If I live north or south of the new runway, why am I hearing aircraft noise?

A10. 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 2 and 49 square miles, depending on the specific aircraft.

Q11. What is a noise contour?

A11. 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 (i.e., when all of the OMP runways are complete) is called the Build-Out Noise Contour. This 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.

Aircraft Noise and Noise Monitoring:

Q12. What is the 65 DNL?

A12. 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 used to determine land use compatibility guidelines (i.e., for residential and school sound insulation). A significant noise impact occurs if analysis shows that a proposed action will cause noise sensitive areas to experience an increase in noise of DNL 1.5 dB or more at or above 65 DNL when compared to the impacts of not doing the project at the same point in time.

Q13. Is there a permanent noise monitor located to capture noise events?

A13. 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 36 noise monitors near O'Hare, FAA flight data, weather data, and noise complaints submitted to the City. On average, over 150,000 flights and 400,000 noise events are recorded by the ANMS each month for O'Hare and Midway. To review the latest monthly noise reports, please visit the City's website on the Internet at <https://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/ANMS/Pages/ANMSreports.aspx>

Sound Insulation:

Q14. Does my home qualify for sound insulation?

A14. 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. Noise contours for interim conditions are not used for sound insulation purposes. Each home must also meet additional eligibility criteria as established by the City and the ONCC. For more information, please call the City's RSIP Inquiry Line at 773.894.3255 or visit the RSIP Property Locator on the City's website at:

<https://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/SoundInsulation/Pages/propertylocator.aspx>

Q15. Is there anything I can do on my own to alleviate the noise in my home?

A15. 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 impacts of aircraft noise. This booklet is available for homeowners surrounding the airport who are not eligible to participate in the RSIP. To download a copy of the booklet, please visit the City's website on the Internet at <https://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/SoundInsulation/Pages/default.aspx>

Information Resources:

City's Noise Complaint Hotline:	800.435.9569 (rolls over to Chicago 311)
City's RSIP Inquiry Line:	773.894.3255
FAA's Great Lakes Regional Noise Line:	847.294.7373
FAA's O'Hare Modernization website:	www.faa.gov/airports/airport_development/omp/
O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission website:	www.oharenoise.org
City's Chicago Department of Aviation website:	www.flychicago.com
City's Chicago Department of Aviation RSIP Property Locator:	https://www.flychicago.com/community/ORDnoise/SoundInsulation/Pages/propertylocator.aspx