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Suburbs hit by jet noise await O'Hare plans



Jet noise from a partially completed parallel runway system at O'Hare has got homeowners affected by noise on edge.

George LeClaire | Staff Photographer, August 2014



Marni Pyke

The suburbs closest to the airport are bracing for an expected announcement by Chicago on its beleaguered O'Hare expansion plans.

For towns such as Bensenville hammered by the din from jets, anything that promises a better distribution of noise is welcome. For DuPage County, leaders are watchful that the long-promised western terminal doesn't fall off the radar permanently.

The O'Hare modernization program falls short by one east-west runway (9-Center/27-Center) on the north end of the airport and the extension of an existing one (9-Right/27-Left). Those projects and another runway on O'Hare's southern tip (10-R/28-Left) should have wrapped up in 2013, but a dispute between Chicago and airport alpha dogs United and American Airlines over costs threw plans into limbo.

The south runway was completed in 2013 and proved the tipping point for the airport to shift to a parallel east-west arrival and departure system that's raising a ruckus for thousands, although the city has stressed the change increases safety. Recently, Crain Chicago Business reported the city is floating a plan to at least build the new north runway, 9-Center/27-Center.

For Bensenville, the status quo creates an imbalance that's pummeling parts of town along with neighborhoods to the north and east, Mayor Frank Soto thinks.

"We would be very happy and pleased to see 9-Center moved up," he said. "Until then we're inundated with noise."

The proposed north runway also heads over more industrial, less populated areas, Soto said.

But if Chicago chucks the extension indefinitely, it means the south airfield -- home to two of the longest runways -- will continue to bear the brunt of larger, noisier jets.

"We would love to see the full build out, only then will we see true noise mitigation," Soto said.

Chicago officials say they can't discuss negotiations.

Meanwhile, DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin, wants movement on a western terminal and contends it can't be ignored because of a long-standing intergovernmental agreement. The county's been chasing western access to O'Hare and a terminal for years with expectations it would ignite economic development in east DuPage.

"I will continue to remind them they made a promise," Cronin said. "I expect the western terminal will be built and I expect to be involved."

Stay tuned. Got an opinion on O'Hare noise, expansion or a western terminal? Drop me an email at mpyke@dailyherald.com.

Your voice

An earlier column on the state suspending mailing notices about expiring license plate stickers prompted Larry Mylin of Mount Prospect to sign up for an email reminder. He did, but the message back from the secretary of state's office was a little cryptic.

"Your license plate email renewal notification from the Secretary of State's Office may take one renewal cycle before it is in effect," it stated.

"What do they mean it will take one cycle?" Mylin asked, and he wasn't the only confused reader.

We checked and a spokesman assured us that people signing up for the reminders will get them in plenty of time to renew.

One more thing

It's been nearly a year since Metra's last fare increase and Union Pacific Northwest commuter Robert Stoll is "still waiting to see any difference in terms of refurbished and clean passenger cars, let alone fewer mechanical breakdowns of locomotives."

The answer is, don't get nostalgic about your retro seat, yet.

In 2015, Metra finished rehabbing 30 railcars and started fixing 41 railcars and 27 locomotives while contracting to upgrade 41 other locomotives, spokesman Michael Gillis said. In 2016, the agency will begin rehabbing 56 older railcars.

New cars won't emerge until 2018 and new locomotives won't debut until 2020.

Gridlock alert

It's January -- and we have road construction.

- Busse Road drivers should plan for nighttime lane closures starting Monday in Elk Grove Village as the Illinois tollway rebuilds bridges on the Jane Addams Tollway. As workers remove beams, one lane will close in each direction at 6 p.m. Monday. Then, from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., expect full road closures at 15-minute intervals. The fun should continue through Thursday with similar closures at night.
- For Chicago-bound suburbanites, avoid Columbus Drive Monday through the next five weeks as two lanes in each direction will close between Randolph and Monroe for maintenance. That also means limited access to the Millennium Park garage.
- The Adams Street bridge at Union Station will close to vehicles Jan. 25 through April, but pedestrians will be able to use sidewalks -- until further notice. Happy trails.

Upcoming

The Chicago Auto Show vrooms from Feb. 13 to 21 at McCormick Place in Chicago. What car do you want to see? Drop me an [email](#) explaining what and why and you could win tickets.

Beacon me up

Just when you thought it wouldn't get more high-tech, the Chicago Auto Show's smartphone app offers a new feature for potential customers who want to go beyond kicking tires. Electronic beacons strategically placed in cars and elsewhere can hook up consumers with exhibitors or let them sign up for a test drive. The show runs Feb. 13 to 21. For more information, go to www.chicagoautoshow.com/ (<http://www.chicagoautoshow.com/>).

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