

O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission



For Immediate Release

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Celebrating Aviation's Past with a Look to It's Future

(ROSEMONT, IL) — December 5, 2003 — The O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission celebrated the first 100 years of aviation by looking ahead to the promise of a quieter future produced by technologically advanced aircraft and new operational procedures at airports.

At its monthly meeting today, the Commission marked the Centennial of Flight with a cake cutting ceremony presided over by Illinois Congressman Mark Kirk (R-10th), Commission Chair, Arlington Heights Mayor Arlene Mulder, and Chicago Aviation Commissioner Thomas Walker. Kirk, who is a strong supporter of the Commission and extremely knowledgeable on aviation issues, said that he will continue working to ensure that O'Hare remains the center of U.S. commercial aviation through improvements that are appropriate for maintaining the quality of life in surrounding communities.

"We're looking for win-win advancements in aviation, both in technology and operations, that address the issues of maintaining aviation leadership in the world and compatibility on aircraft noise issues," said Kirk as he introduced to the Commission three NASA engineers who help lead the agency's Quiet Aircraft Technology (QAT) program.

Richard Wlezien, Program Manager, Vehicle Systems, NASA Office of Aerospace Technology; Dennis Huff, Chief of Acoustics, NASA Glenn Research Center; and Kevin Shepherd, Head of Structural Acoustics, NASA Langley Research Center briefed the Commission members on their cutting-edge research work aimed at making future jet aircraft quieter, while at the same time exploring ways to reduce noise created by today's aircraft.

"Our goals are to reduce the perceived noise impact of future aircraft by one half within ten years and by three quarters within 25 years," Wlezien said. "Our ultimate goal is to contain all objectionable aircraft noise within the borders of O'Hare and the nation's other airports."

Wlezien told the Commission that in addition to research work on quieter engines and airframe improvements, the QAT team also is looking at ways to reduce aircraft noise through new take-off and approach procedures. In addition to Advanced Flight Track Procedures (AFTPro), which the Commission has been promoting to reduce aircraft noise over populated areas on take offs, Wlezien outlined a new experimental procedure called "Continuous Descent Approach."

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“On approach to an airport a pilot will repeatedly power down and rev up the engines as the aircraft descends and levels off and then descends again,” explained Wlezien. “With the Continuous Descent Approach procedures that we have experimented with at Louisville International Airport, the approach is at a constant rate of decent and the engines are set at one power level, greatly reducing the amount of noise produced during landing.”

Wlezien cautioned, however, that there are many safety, procedural and technology challenges that must be addressed before Continuous Descent Approach could be used at airports like O’Hare that have complex and heavily used airspace.

“While there has been tremendous progress in reducing aircraft noise around O’Hare in just the last several years since our Commission was founded, we fully understand the complexity of the challenge to reduce noise even more,” said Mulder. “Still, we are very encouraged by the outstanding work of NASA’s QAT group.”

Kirk asked the Commission members to urge their elected representatives in Washington to vote for continued funding of the QAT program.

Today’s presentations by Kirk and the QAT group were part of an ongoing series of speakers who inform and advise the Commission on significant aircraft noise issues.

The O’Hare Noise Compatibility Commission began working in 1996 to bring together the parties that are most able to reduce aircraft noise with representatives of communities affected by aircraft noise in a partnership to address jet noise at its impact and sources. The Commission’s current membership includes the villages of Arlington Heights, Bartlett, Bellwood, Franklin Park, Hoffman Estates, Melrose Park, Mount Prospect, Niles, Norridge, Palatine, River Grove, River Forest, Rosemont, Schaumburg, Stone Park and Elmwood Park; the cities of Des Plaines, Northlake, Oak Park, Rolling Meadows and Chicago; unincorporated Cook County; and school districts 59 (Elk Grove Village, Des Plaines, Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect), 63 (Des Plaines, Niles, Morton Grove and Glenview), 80 (Norridge), 81 (Schiller Park), 84 (Franklin Park), 84½ (River Grove), 86 (Harwood Heights), 87 (Berkeley, Northlake, Bellwood), 89 (Maywood, Melrose Park and Broadview), 214 (Elk Grove Village, Des Plaines, Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, Rolling Meadows, Prospect Heights, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove), 234 (Norridge, Harwood Heights), 299 (Chicago Public Schools) and 401 (Elmwood Park). The commission holds a public meeting on the first Friday of every month, except July. Most meetings are held at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Road in Rosemont, Illinois.

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