

Comments to the City of Chicago
regarding the World Gateway Program and other
Capital Improvements
Draft Environmental Assessment from
the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare
and US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association
December 13, 2001
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(5-minute oral presentation)

I am Jack Saporito, representing two organizations.

The Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare has over 1,200 members, living in 41 communities including Chicago that are affected by O'Hare Airport operations.

US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association is a national organization representing approximately 1.5 million people in the United States.

Our membership includes physicians as well as individuals who are employed in the aviation and aerospace industries, Baylor University's School of Aviation Sciences as well as cities, citizens and civic groups, and others. As a result, we have in-depth knowledge of the issues, bringing strong factual evidence to the table.

We oppose the Gateway plan for the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Chicago-area residents whose lives will be harmed by it. Since terminals, road ways, etc. are the basic foundations needed to expand airports to increase capacity, none of the components of the Gateway project can be categorically excluded from the NEPA process, nor can the Gateway plan be considered in a segmented way, isolated from the rest of the O'Hare expansion plans as the City is attempting to do. This project demands a full environmental impact statement review.

Our health and that of our children must be protected from both current and future airport and aircraft operations. These operations generate staggering amounts and various and unusual types of toxic air, noise, ground, and water pollution – 1-3 Butadiene, formaldehyde and benzene are just a few of the hundreds of toxic pollutants and known human carcinogens, O'Hare operations emit in hundreds to thousands of tons per year. The aviation industry is largely unregulated, and the meager regulations that do exist are enforced only loosely.

The relatively few thousand commercial jet planes operating, use a highly disproportionate amount of the world's oil supply, about 10%, and over ninety (90) percent of those toxic jet engine emissions are emitted within 20-40 miles of the airport, creating a severe local impact.

In addition to the significant and very disturbing impacts that aircraft have on our upper atmosphere, the emissions from airports and aircraft operations pose a major public health threat to airport workers and residents.

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According to US-EPA and Chicago's own data, Cook County ranked #2 in the nation in the amount of carcinogens released by industry. O'Hare, according to its own data, contributes more than 18% of the reported carcinogens in Cook County, that includes the city of Chicago, large suburbs and two of the largest manufacturing regions. That is enormous! But, O'Hare's data, for a number of reasons, grossly under report the amount of pollutants emitted.

Chicago is already one of the most polluted cities in the United States and has some of the highest cancer rates in the country, especially in communities around O'Hare. It is aircraft emissions, not other airport and ground pollution sources such as cars and trucks, that are the cause of most cancers (up to 99%) and the probable cause of many other diseases for the large area surrounding O'Hare.

Regrettably, technological answers to adequately mitigate the significant public health and environmental problems are decades away. The public deserves to know the true dimensions of the problem, so that it can participate in informed decisions about whether more flights are added.

People live in the Chicago area because of the quality of life. Expanding O'Hare will harm the Chicagoland community, especially residents downwind and generally east of the airport. It will lead to a severe decline in livability in these areas, as has happened elsewhere, such as in Atlanta near Hartsfield because of its huge operation. As stated by the director of the Clark-Atlanta University's Environmental Justice Resource Center, "Pollution kills communities, not just people.... A clean environment is a right, not a privilege."

We need a full environmental impact study prepared and this whole Gateway plan needs to be included with all the other O'Hare expansion segments as an aggregate.

We will be submitting written testimony regarding the many failings of the City's Draft Environmental Assessment for this project.

Thank you.

. Airport emissions have been linked to cancer, asthma, brain tumors, emphysema, heart disease, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, kidney damage, and numerous other conditions. Evidence shows air emissions from airports and aircraft operations expose an extremely large number of people living and working at distances greater than 20 miles from a facility. Likewise, other studies from around the world, from many different sources, including states, countries,

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school districts, airport workers and communities, all show that airport and aircraft-generated pollution are potentially lethal to people who live and work even many miles from airports.