

Letter 3

Draft

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

No bottom line.

Thank you for your letter of September 27, cosigned by your congressional colleagues, regarding your concerns with the treatment of Gary/Chicago Airport (GYG) in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Record of Decision (ROD) for the proposed South Suburban Airport (SSA) located in Will County, Illinois.

Body goes on and on and on. Poor organization contributes to length.

The FAA recognizes that GYG serves an important role within the Chicago region, and we will continue to work closely with the airport on its expansion plans to meet its operational demands. As you know, we are currently working with the airport to meet those needs, as demonstrated by the \$4.4 million in grants awarded in 2002 for security enhancements, rehabilitation of the primary runway, construction of a new apron, and Phase 2 of the Environmental Impact Statement for the extension of the primary runway and associated land acquisition and railroad relocation.

As you indicated, the FAA accepted GYG's 2001 Master Plan study and approved its Airport Layout Plan (ALP), which depicts expansion projects that "provide the needed capacity for steady or increased traffic" at the airport over the next 20 years. The projects considered in both of these documents were based on GYG's aviation forecasts, which were higher than the FAA's Terminal Area Forecasts, and include the extension of the primary runway, additional gates at the existing terminal, and the development of a new terminal beyond the 20-year planning timeframe.

As a practicable demonstration of the FAA's longstanding support for GYG, we also conducted a feasibility study for conceptual development at GYG beyond the 20-year planning period. This conceptual development was accepted as a "plan on file" for the purposes of evaluating the airspace that would be required if and when this conceptual plan was justified based on future viable aviation forecasts. Once justified, the conceptual plan would then be formally submitted by the Chicago/Gary Airport Authority as part of an ALP and subsequently reviewed by the FAA.

We remain ready to respond expeditiously to any submissions on behalf of the airport, but to date the FAA has not received any revisions to the 2001 approved ALP with additional supporting justification. The development depicted in the GYG feasibility study was not considered in

the SSA ROD due to its highly conceptual nature. Similarly, the conceptual plan for the modernization of Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) has not been formalized by the submittal of an ALP and, therefore, was not appropriate for consideration in the SSA ROD.

I want to personally assure you that the FAA does not have a bias for the proposed SSA. There are a variety of options available for addressing the aviation capacity issues in the Chicago region. These options include the expansion of ORD, the use of other airports (such as GYY and Rockford), the development of SSA, the use of other modes of transportation, and/or a combination of these alternatives. In a deregulated domestic aviation industry, the Federal Government does not control where, when, and how airlines provide their services, nor are we the driving force in airport capacity development. Those decisions are made by the aviation industry in partnership with local and regional government in response to market demand. Certainly, we will provide any support and assistance that we can and will do our part to increase capacity and efficiency wherever possible.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me or Mr. David Balloff, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Identical letters have been sent to the cosigners of your letter.

Sincerely,

Marion C. Blakey
Administrator