

# How ONCC Arrived At Next 'Fly Quiet' Test

By ANNE LUNDE Journal & Topics Reporter | Posted: Wednesday, March 15, 2017 8:00 pm

The O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission has approved a second test period for rotating overnight plane traffic at O'Hare International Airport, but it was caught off guard Friday (March 10) when the issue came up for a vote.

After two meetings of the ONCC's Ad Hoc Fly Quiet II committee, where results of a six-month test in 2016 were discussed, the big issue seemed to be whether swapping five old overnight flight plans for five new ones would be accepted by the full membership, with the goal of starting a second six-month set of rotations, possibly as early as late April.

A big issue in the first set of rotations, two series of 12-week night noise patterns, was how much the surviving northwest-southeast runway, currently known as 15-33, was depended upon to provide relief. At night, one runway is designated for arrivals and one for departures, and the rotation tests tried to move traffic at least every few weeks away from the east-west runways which take the brunt of the daytime and nighttime traffic.

When packets were sent to ONCC delegates on the Tuesday preceding the meeting, prior discussions shifted focus.

ONCC Chairman Arlene Juracek of Mount Prospect and Chicago Dept. of Aviation officials said the permanent closing date for 15-33 now is likely to be March 2018, which does not allow time for having another six months of night relief using 15-33. Instead there was a new proposal to have a 12-week (three-month) test with 15-33 and some of the substitute rotation routings.

Then, Assistant Aviation Commissioner Aaron Frame said, they would develop a second three-month rotation without 15-33, which could start testing by late spring this year.

Ad Hoc committee chairman, Joe Annunzio from Niles, had started his report by proposing the membership take time to discuss the "final report" from Feb. 22. Booking conflicts for the banquet room at Café La Cave in Des Plaines limited the meeting to an hour. Delaying a vote for the next night rotation to the next ONCC meeting would mean at least two extra months of waiting for overnight relief.

Thirty-six representatives voted in favor of a plan for two three-month tests; 30 votes were needed, Juracek said.

A number of delegates, wanting mitigation for their communities as long as possible, first asked to keep 15-33 in the evening rotation as long as possible, hoping for the full year, or at least a full six months. The two sets of three-month rotations would allow more things to be tested, including options that could be applied in a several-year gap between the closing of 15-33 and the earliest availability of an extension of Runway 9C to the west.

Among the 10 delegates who opposed the plan were Ald. Malcolm Chester (6th) from Des Plaines and Acting Mayor Marty Maloney of Park Ridge.

Chester, a member of the Ad Hoc group, has been critical of the impacts from the first set of rotations, which added extra noise along the northeast-southwest diagonal runways which fly over Des Plaines, Park Ridge and Niles. These have been saved as diagonals so there can be runways to use when weather makes landings and departures difficult for the predominantly east-west wind flow newer runways.

These diagonals are also depended upon in the new overnight rotations, so Chester said that instead of having concentrated noise over his ward night and day, already an issue, the new plans seem to shift the noise over all of Des Plaines.

In the case of Park Ridge, also impacted by these same diagonal runways for arrivals and departures, new turning strategies used by aircraft are sending planes banking at lower angles, in corridors where they have not been before.

The other issue raised is that preparations for a Western Access entry on the DuPage side of the airport are happening at some level, involving the Illinois State Tollway Authority, the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the city of Chicago. Various proposals have started and stalled since the mid-1980s, when one of Mayor Harold Washington's aviation commissioners refused to consider western access and Gov. Jim Edgar canceled building the eastern half of the Elgin-O'Hare expressway.

While Aviation Commissioner Ginger Evans has mentioned Western Access as a reason to close 15-33, details are not specific in ONCC meetings. Al Rapp of Park Ridge, representing Fair Allocation in Runways (FAiR), asked whether Chicago has signed deals with the railroad or tollway related to a possible ring road at that end of the airport property.

Frame and airport consultant Jeffrey Jackson from Landrum and Brown discussed briefly the logistics of the rotation tests. Using 9C is not part of the rotations now because it won't be ready to use for more than two more years. They plan to swap in a couple of runways which have not been in rotations before, in an effort to add variety to the night mix.

There has been an effort to match primary and secondary night flight patterns so that whichever way the wind shifts in a designated week, the noise will be concentrated on the same pairs of runways, north or south or central, for example, with arrivals and departures over the same geographic areas in one direction or another.

Juracek said the second three-month test would check rotation options for seeking overnight relief when neither 15-33 or 9C available.

"We're going to be in interim conditions till 2020," she predicted.

The goal of the second test, Frame said, was to run some additional configurations. Modeling with numbers on paper was a starting point, but he said there is value to getting experience and "real time feedback." Several of the 2016 test rotations proved to not coordinate properly on ground taxiways and had to be replaced.

Ald. John Arena (45th Ward, Chicago) asked what the chance was to go immediately from the 12-week test with 15-33 to another 12-week test without it, to avoid going back to the heavy night traffic experienced

since the 2016 test ended in December.

Frame said work on a third test could be developed this spring to reduce the lag time between tests.

Juracek announced that elections for 2017 ONCC officers will be held at the May meeting, as suburban elections on April 4 will potentially change municipal officials who are ONCC delegates.