

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 31, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Secretary Duffy and Administrator Bedford:

We are writing to express our concern regarding the decision to extend for a full year the order limiting flights at Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD). While a daily cap of 2,708 flights commenced in May and was expected to conclude in October 2026, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) now has made the decision to keep this restriction in place through October 30, 2027.

The FAA's notice of such extension references construction projects as the leading factor in this decision. Yet, through our offices' discussions with the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA), we understand that construction conditions will improve throughout this summer, with all taxiways and runways open by November 1, 2026. Moreover, USDOT, the FAA, the City of Chicago, airlines, and other partners have invested billions of dollars in runways through the O'Hare Modernization Program. Local partners also have invested billions of dollars to prepare ORD's gate capacity to handle the flight growth our country expects to see over the coming decades. We reiterate our request for the FAA's support in these endeavors. Any actions that could impede planned growth should be made with the utmost care and consideration.

Given ORD is seated at the crossroads of the United States and is necessary to connect flights from coast to coast, any changes or operations at ORD have a ripple-effect on the entire nation's aviation system. Further, in 2025, according to the FAA's own data, ORD was the busiest airport in the country—and by the Airports Council International (ACI) World's data, it was the busiest in the *world*. Reducing operations at the world's busiest airport for one-and-a-half years reduces available flights for travelers at arguably the most crucial nexus for the United States and stunts economic growth for the entire Midwest.

Ahead of implementing this extension order, we request the following information by August 15, 2026:

1. According to the CDA, all taxiways and runways will be open by November 1, 2026. What was the FAA's rationale for extending the flight reduction through October 30, 2027, and citing concerns over construction?
2. What parties did the FAA consult and which data did it review to arrive at this decision?
3. Since our previous letter to Administrator Bedford, sent on March 6, 2026, requesting that the FAA prioritize additional resources and air traffic controllers at ORD, what actions has FAA taken to help alleviate congestion and better support operations at ORD?

We look forward to working together to ensure the continued success of ORD. Thank you for your prompt response to this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator