

Online **Yellow Pages**

CHICAGOLANDYP.COM

Find a Business in your area

- [E-mail this story](#)
- [Printable format](#)
- [Search archives](#)

Search: [chicagotribune.com](#) Web enhanced by [Google](#)

[chicagotribune.com](#) >> [Local news](#)

Most e-mailed (last 24 hours)

- [Man dies after 49 hours of computer games](#)
- [Meat vs. veg](#)
- ['Napoleon' star might be game for a 2nd round of tetherball](#)
- [Latinos drive growth](#)
- [After firings, Sears back hiring](#)

[More from today](#)
[Past week](#)

Stories

[U.S. controllers' chief endorses O'Hare plan](#)
July 27, 2005

[FAA gets a warning on O'Hare plan](#)
July 22, 2005

FAA backs Daley's O'Hare plan

By **Jon Hilkevitch and Gary Washburn**

Tribune staff reporters

Published July 28, 2005, 8:26 PM CDT

Plans to expand O'Hare International Airport will be altered to save one of two 1800s-era cemeteries in the path of a proposed runway, Chicago officials said Thursday, as their project to add flights and ease passenger delays cleared one of the last regulatory hurdles.

The City Hall announcement that the 157 graves at Rest Haven Cemetery in Bensenville would be spared came after the federal government selected Mayor Richard Daley's airfield layout as the best and least environmentally damaging of three expansion alternatives considered. The Federal Aviation Administration said there was no way to leave the remains of 1,300 people at nearby St. Johannes Cemetery in place without seriously compromising the success of the expansion.

The final environmental impact statement issued by the FAA said the city's plan had the lowest average level of flight delays, the most cost savings for passengers and airlines, and the smallest additional impact on noise, air and water pollution.

"This is good news for Chicagoans, because O'Hare is the engine of the region's economy," Daley said. "And it's good news for people throughout the country because O'Hare is the centerpiece of the nation's aviation system.

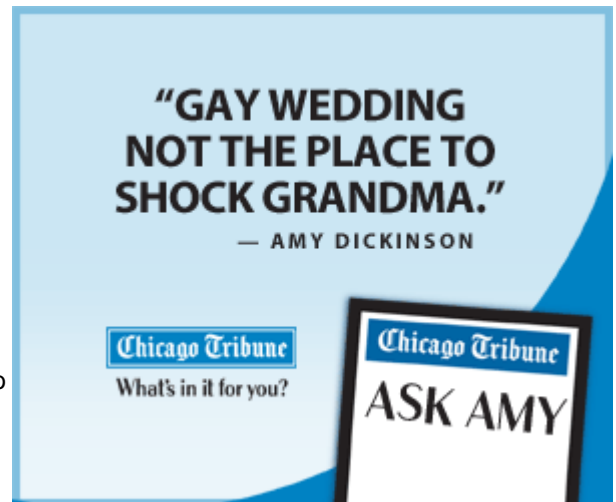
"If you don't have the foresight, if you don't have the vision, if you don't have the stamina to follow this through, projects like this would never be completed," he said.

But the estimated cost of the airport project, which Daley said in 2001 was \$6.6 billion, has increased to \$7.5 billion in 2004 dollars, according to the FAA report.

The cost is expected to rise more because of increases in labor and material prices, city aviation officials told the FAA. Pending FAA approval, O'Hare officials plan to begin construction later this year on a runway on the north end of the airport that the city expects to open in 2007. Work on the eight-runway reconfiguration would continue through at least 2013.

O'Hare-expansion opponents vowed to tie up construction in court, arguing that the plan fails requirements for federal funding, that the airlines cannot afford to help pay for it, and that the project violates religious and 1st Amendment rights in connection with the cemeteries.

"The sad part is this is not about building air capacity. It is just another patronage job-creating, take-care-of-your-friends pork barrel project," said Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson, whose suburb, along with Bensenville, is leading the fight against O'Hare expansion. "Chicago can try to pull all the strings it



wants, but the law is still there."

The FAA estimates the total cost of the runways and related spending on two new terminals and long-term improvements at \$14.3 billion. It does not include \$3 billion to \$4 billion to upgrade mass transit service, build a western-access road into the airport and widen surrounding highways.

The environmental report is the last major study, culminating three years of analysis, required by law before the FAA can approve, reject or modify the city's O'Hare expansion plan. A decision is expected in September. The city hopes to break ground immediately.

Two other alternatives that the FAA ruled out Thursday were variations on the approved plan. One would have used the city's layout minus a far southern runway that would require acquiring hundreds of acres in Bensenville; the second was an idea offered by O'Hare air-traffic controllers to angle the far southern runway to reduce runway crossings by taxiing aircraft.

The FAA is holding off on determining whether the O'Hare plan passes a mandatory benefits-cost test. That decision will come after the FAA approves or rejects construction, said FAA spokesman Tony Molinaro. It could affect whether the city gets an unprecedented \$2 billion in federal grants and passenger ticket taxes it is seeking for the project.

The delay in the benefits-cost decision partly stems from a government watchdog report that criticized FAA oversight of O'Hare expansion plans. Inspector General Kenneth Mead of the U.S. Department of Transportation said in a report last week that the FAA has failed to verify the accuracy of Chicago's cost estimates for O'Hare expansion, including the construction schedule and whether city assumptions about federal funding levels are realistic.

In response, the FAA hired a third-party consultant to audit the finances.

Though it will take time to fully analyze the 40,000-page environmental report, the FAA's finding on Rest Haven was one of only a few surprises that immediately surfaced. The city had planned to destroy both Rest Haven and St. Johannes to make room for Runway 10 Center, which the city expects to open in 2009.

But the FAA said Rest Haven--along with the former Green Street School building in Bensenville and the Lake LGK property in Elk Grove Village--could remain undisturbed if Chicago modified plans to build new airport cargo facilities. But access to the cemetery would be limited.

"We need to reconfigure the apron to the runway, but Rest Haven will stay intact unless circumstances arise beyond our control," said Rosemarie Andolino, executive director of the O'Hare Modernization Program.

Daley acknowledged the concerns of relatives of the Civil War veterans and other members of St. John's Church of Christ who are buried at St. Johannes. But he said the historic burial ground could not be allowed to block the revitalization of O'Hare.

"Anybody can see the emotion that anyone has [with such a move]. There are personal feelings. Yes. You understand that. But under the law, the federal government has done this all over the country," the mayor said.

Family members of those buried in St. Johannes said they would wage their struggle in the courts, in Congress, and, if necessary, in the cemetery itself to prevent it from being razed.

"The FAA is making a mockery of federal religious freedom protections," said Anthony Picarello, president and general counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which is representing the families. "They acknowledge that the salvation of the deceased at St. Johannes Cemetery depends on their undisturbed remains, but then order them to be bulldozed away. Our country's founders are also turning in their graves."

jhilkevitch@tribune.com
gwashburn@tribune.com



**STOCKS AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS
WITH OPTIONS.**