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Mayor

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Agreement Reached to Expand Capacity at O'Hare and Foster Economic Growth Nationwide

\$1.17 Billion Project Will Construct Next Phase of O'Hare Modernization

CHICAGO – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, executives from United Airlines and American Airlines and U.S. Senators Richard Durbin and Mark Kirk announced today a \$1.17 billion agreement that will allow the O'Hare Modernization Program to move forward, add runway capacity, and prevent flight delays from growing to unacceptable levels. With this agreement between the City of Chicago and American and United Airlines in place, work can begin on an additional south runway, as well as other airfield improvements needed to deal with increasing traffic at the airport.

With 64 million yearly passengers connecting to 130 domestic airports, the O'Hare Modernization Program is a project of national economic significance that will help ensure America can win the future by moving people and goods more quickly and efficiently to destinations across the country.

The O'Hare Modernization Program, managed by the Chicago Department of Aviation, is one of the largest construction projects in the country at one of the world's busiest airports. The first phase of the program, which is still under construction, includes two new runways, a runway extension, and a new air traffic control tower. When the program is complete, O'Hare will have eight modern runways, reducing flight delays and improving efficiency for travelers throughout the country.

"This is a landmark achievement that will benefit air travelers throughout the entire nation," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "Making improvements to O'Hare will not only reduce flight delays and improve service for air passengers across America, it will ensure one of our busiest airports continues to thrive economically in the future."

“O’Hare International Airport is the economic engine that drives the economy of our city, our region and our state and connects Chicago to the world. Unless we continue to modernize its infrastructure and operations, we will lose our competitive edge in the global economy,” said Mayor Daley. “That’s why I am so pleased that the City has reached agreement with American and United Airlines on a way to proceed immediately with the completion phase of the O’Hare Modernization Program (OMP). The OMP keeps businesses thriving, residents working and our economy growing. I would like to thank United States Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Senator Richard Durbin, Senator Mark Kirk, and our airline partners for their hard work and cooperation in coming to this agreement. ”

“I want to thank Mayor Daley for working with us to reach an agreement that helps fulfill our shared vision for a world-class airport for our hometown, while recognizing the economic realities we all face,” said Jeff Smisek, president and CEO of United Airlines. “I also want to thank Secretary LaHood and his team who worked tirelessly with the airlines and the Mayor’s team to bring us together. We are grateful for the involvement of Senators Durbin and Kirk and for the federal support that makes this project possible. Finally, I also want to thank the many civic leaders of Chicago, especially Lester Crown, who have been dedicated to ensuring fiscally responsible development at O’Hare.”

“We appreciate the extraordinary efforts of Secretary Ray LaHood and Senators Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk of Illinois, in helping to reach an agreement that carefully balances the legitimate concerns of all the parties, allows us to move forward in a deliberate and prudent way, and resolves our legal disputes,” said Gerard Arpey, Chairman and CEO of American Airlines. “Today we reaffirm our support of Mayor Daley and our shared vision for a world-class airport at O’Hare. At the same time, the parties have crafted a plan that recognizes the turbulent conditions of our industry and allows us to continue a dialogue with the City over the best timing and pacing of construction going forward. As a result, we believe this agreement will benefit consumers, our shareholders and employees and the communities that we serve throughout the country for years to come.”

"Shortly after the lawsuit against the city was filed, Senator Kirk and I met with airlines and encouraged them to sit down with the city and work out an agreement," said Durbin. "There were many who were skeptical that a deal could be reached, but fortunately Mayor Daley was not one of them. I commend him and the CEO's of both airlines for their commitment to working hard to resolve their differences outside the courtroom. I also want to thank Secretary LaHood for engaging and bringing everyone together to reach today's deal - which is good news for the City of Chicago."

"The O'Hare Modernization Program is one of the most important economic development projects in the nation," Sen. Kirk said. "The deal negotiated by the City of Chicago and the airlines means runway expansion will continue without missing this summer's construction season. More importantly, a path is created to finish this important initiative that will help northern Illinois attract new businesses and create high-quality jobs. I'd like to thank Secretary LaHood and his team for brokering this agreement that ensures O'Hare will continue as one of the nation's preeminent airports."

The construction schedule presented today will accommodate the increasing activity without creating significant delays for passengers. The parties have agreed to return to the table no later than March 1, 2013 to negotiate the terms and timing of the remaining airfield components of the O'Hare Modernization Program. When completed, the program will provide needed airport runway capacity well into the next decade and beyond.

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