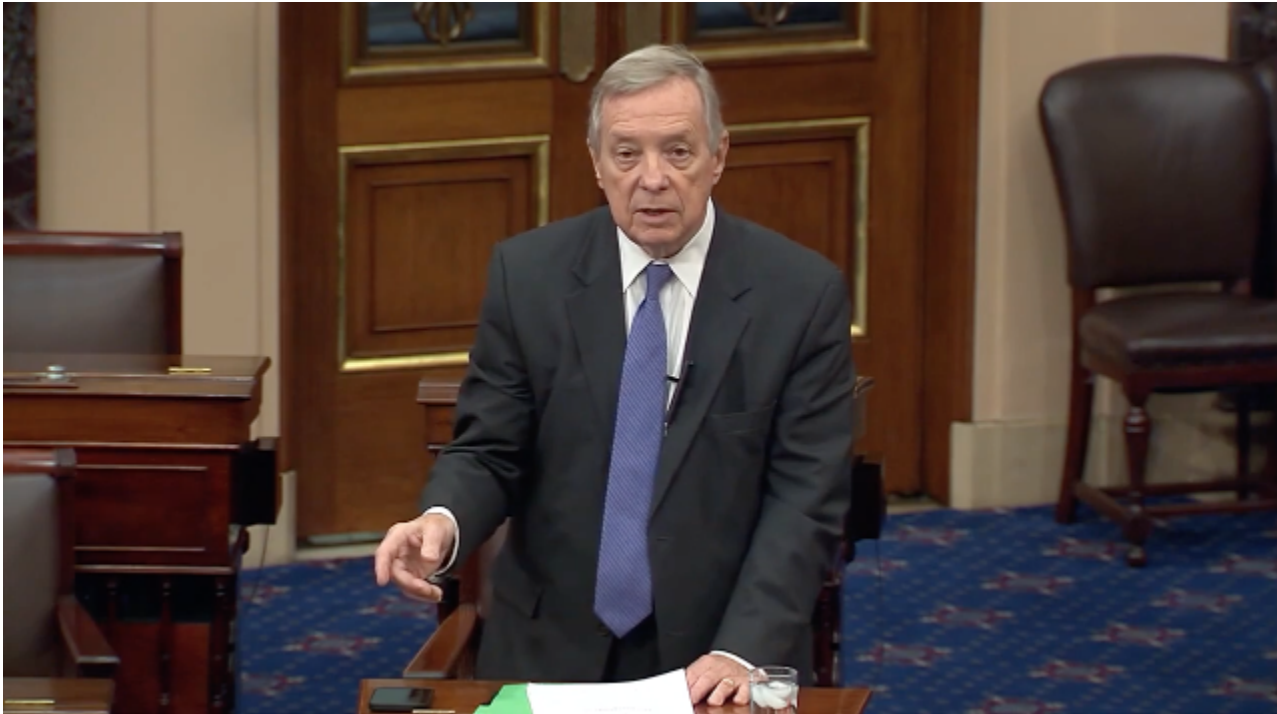


Durbin Urges Secretary Of Transportation To Convene Meeting Regarding Expansion Of O'Hare International Airport

by Theresa Bordenave
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CHICAGO – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg urging him to convene a meeting between the City of Chicago, United Airlines, American Airlines, and the Illinois Congressional delegation on discrepancies over how to proceed with the O'Hare International Airport

Terminal Area Project (TAP). This request comes as the airlines have expressed concerns about proceeding with TAP as it was outlined in their original 2018 agreement with the City of Chicago.

“I am writing to follow up on the [December request](#), sent by Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation, asking for you to convene a meeting between the City of Chicago, United Airlines, American Airlines, and the Illinois Congressional delegation on the O’Hare Terminal Area Project (TAP). All parties urgently need the expert mediation that only the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) can provide to ensure a deal that is both fair and beneficial to local taxpayers and all passengers who fly through O’Hare,” the letter began.

The project would significantly expand O’Hare’s gate capacity, offering the first “global alliance hub” where domestic airlines and their international partners will be located in the same terminal. TAP also includes plans for two satellite terminals. Collectively, the TAP would expand O’Hare’s gate capacity by 25 percent, enabling the airport to accommodate a wider range of aircraft, improve gate access for arriving aircraft, reduce delays, enhance airline performance, and significantly improve the passenger experience.

Deviating from the 2018 agreement, the airlines are now pushing for a plan that would either eliminate or indefinitely delay Satellite 2. Such a change to the project’s scope would harm O’Hare’s status as a world-class airport and place additional strain on the airport as through-traffic is projected to steadily increase by 2050.

“To preserve the Airport’s world-class status, any agreement must include the 25% gate capacity increase that was part of the original 2018 TAP agreement, which primarily would come from the addition of a Satellite 2 terminal. However, the airlines have continued to advocate for a plan that either indefinitely delays or removes Satellite 2 altogether, which would result in two new gates for O’Hare within the same timeframe,” Durbin wrote.

“O’Hare is the fourth-busiest airport in the world, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) estimates that enplanements at O’Hare will grow from 32.6 million in 2022 to 71.9 million by 2050. Adding gates incrementally would fail to prepare O’Hare to accommodate this projected growth, as our country’s other busiest airports continue to plan and execute major upgrades and expansions,” the letter continued.

Noting that the federal government has already invested in the success of O’Hare, Durbin reminded Secretary Buttigieg that Durbin recently helped to secure a combined \$90 million investment from FAA’s Airport Terminal Program for O’Hare Terminal 3

renovations, through two of the largest airport grants awarded under the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.

“With this in mind, it cannot be overstated that both Chicago and the Midwest’s economic success and connectivity are at stake in this decision—a decision in which USDOT and the FAA have a vested interest, considering O’Hare’s present success as a top asset within the national aviation system,” Durbin wrote. “To ensure the greatest impact of these federal investments at the Airport, its other planned upgrades must proceed as originally planned and approved by all parties.”

Durbin closed the letter by reiterating his request for mediation, which would expedite a solution that supports O’Hare’s future and travelers who frequent the world-class airport.

“I respectfully request your timely assistance in meeting with the City and the airlines to yield the best possible outcome for not only the people of Illinois, but all global citizens who fly through O’Hare,” the letter concluded.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).