What’s Happening at O’Hare?

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If you’re familiar with KORD/Chicago O’Hare Airport then you probably know that there are a lot of runways there. 8 if you’re just counting strips of tarmac, 16 to be really specific.

You might also know that it has had some works done on its runways recently, so here is a look at *what’s happened, what’s coming next* and most importantly, *what to expect* if you’re thinking of heading in there.

The One that got Built

Runway 9C/27C opened on November 5th, 2020.

This is the last runway to be built as part of their modernisation program, and there is a very handy video on how it is being used, which you can check out here on the FAA’s main ‘Great Lakes (AGL) O’Hare Modernization Program (OMP) page.

The One that got Extended

Runway 9R/27L has been extended, and it re-opened for operations on December 2, 2021.

Existing Runways	Length	Width	Year Opened
Runway 4L/22R	7,500 ft	150 ft	1943
Runway 9R/27L	11,260 ft	150 ft	1943 (extended 3,293 feet in 2021)
Runway 10L/28R	13,000 ft	150 ft	1968 (extended 3,000 feet in 2008)
Runway 4R/22L	8,075 ft	150 ft	1971
Runway 9L/27R	7,500 ft	150 ft	2008
Runway 10C/28C	10,800 ft	200 ft	2013
Runway 10R/28L	7,500 ft	150 ft	2015
Runway 9C/27C	11,245 ft	200 ft	2020
Closed Runways	**Length**	**Decommission Date**	
Runway 18/36	5,341 ft	9/29/2008	
Runway 14L/32R	10,005 ft	7/21/2016	
Runway 14L/32L	9,676 ft	3/29/2018	

The Rundown on the Runways.

Which runway can you expect?

Arrival operations on 9R/27R are currently limited, and will remain so through at least the first half of 2022 while they get their ILS system fully setup and tested.

So, right now, they have the following operations planned for their daytime ops, which it might be worth familiarising yourself with if you're heading in, just so you know what to plan for.

When its a Westerly Flow:

Landing: 27R, 27C, 28C

Departing: 22L, 27L, 28R

When its a Easterly Flow:

Landing: They only use 3 runways at a time, but have multiple combinations:

9L, 10C, 10R (the top choice)

9C, 10C, 10R (the other top choice)

9L, 9C, 10C

9L, 9C, 10R

Departing: 9R, 10L

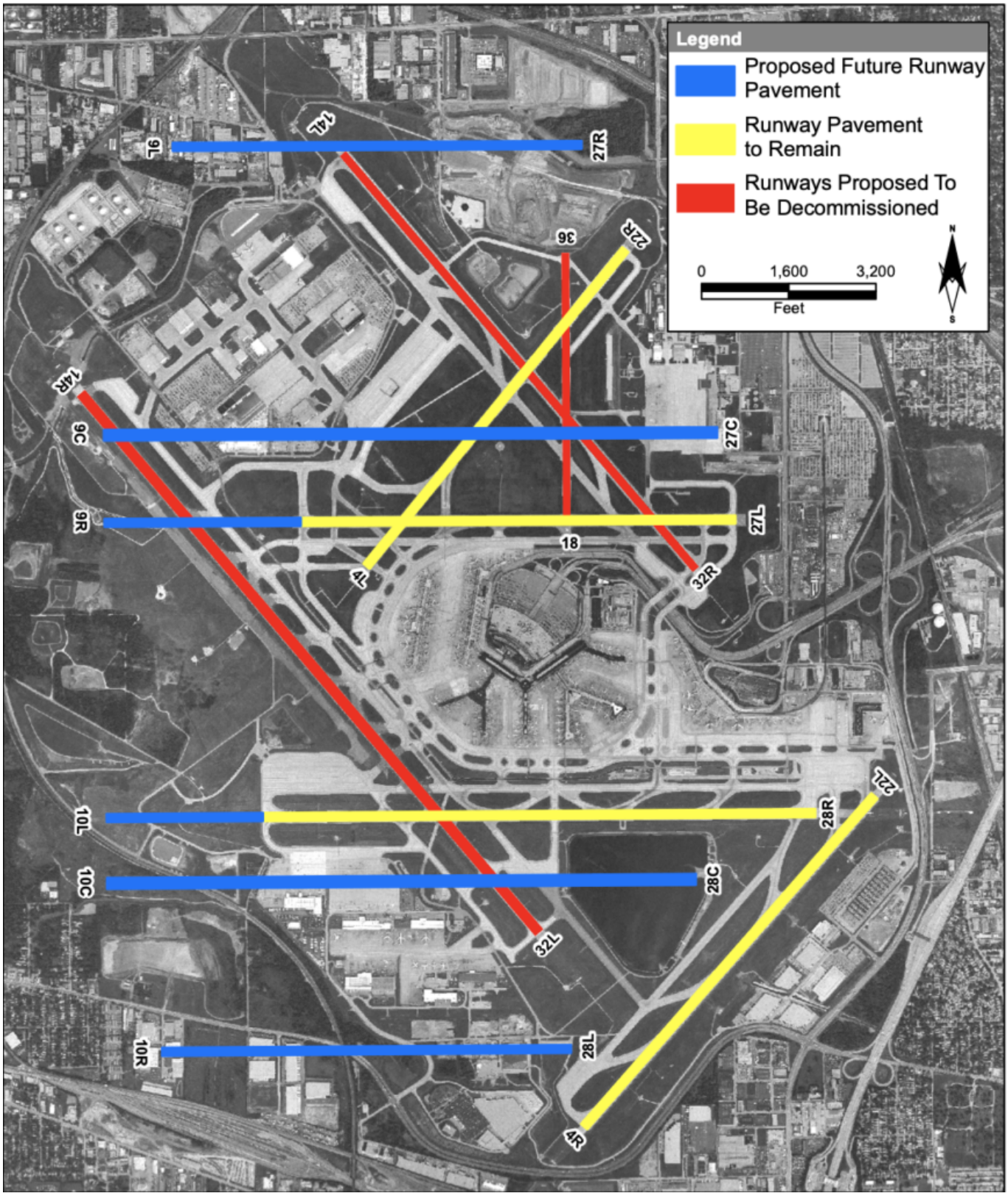


Diagram of runway plans

Some non-operational (but interesting) facts:

The O'Hare 21 plan is hoping to create the *"most efficient and accessible gateway in the world."* A good plan given the airport hit a (pre-pandemic) record in 2019, with around 84.6 million passengers travelling through.

There are **193 gates available**, which sounds a lot, but bear in mind the majority of these are already

leased by the big hub carriers. Which leads us to the next point…

Let's talk about the other options

KORD/O'Hare is a massive hub airport utilised by the major carriers. It is busy. The airspace is busy. To be honest, you probably don't to fly in here unless you have a good reason to, like being a scheduled commercial carrier, if you like really busy complex airspace and taxying.

The 'Chicago Square Mile' is the arguably the busiest bit of airspace in the world of arrivals and departures, but luckily there are some other airpots in the area which you might want to look into, namely KMDW/Midway and KGYY/Gary.

KMDW/Midway

The smaller, but by no means small KMDW/Midway airport is right next door. They have 43 gates and are **far more equipped for catering to General Aviation folk.**

The airport has **4 runways** laid out in a big cross (and one tiny fifth runway). One of the big threats here is the fact they cross and you need to keep a good look and listen out for traffic and avoiding runway hotspot incursions.

The **longest runway is 6522 foot** (1988m), and they have ILS CAT I available on three runways, and RNAV on pretty much everything else.

Runway	Length	Width	
Runway 4L-22R	5,507 ft	150 ft	General Aviation
Runway 4R-22L	6,445 ft	150 ft	Air Carrier
Runway 13C-31C	6,522 ft	150 ft	Air Carrier
Runway 13L-31R	5,141 ft	150 ft	General Aviation
Runway 13R-31L	3,859 ft	150 ft	General Aviation

The Midway runways.

KGYY/Gary

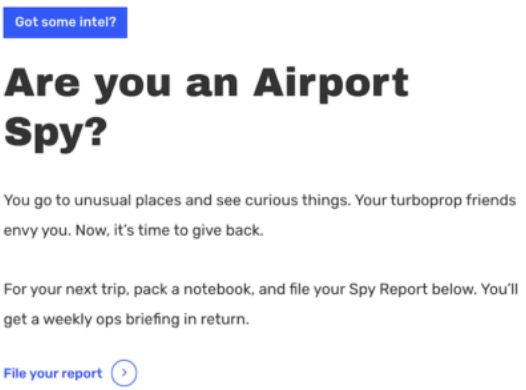
And then there is Gary.

KGYY/Gary is also an **International airport** and a great one for corporate and "weekend" flyers heading to Chicago. It has an **8,859 foot runway** and is a *'full service'* airport. There are major airframe and engine maintenance facilities available, and ILS approach for runway 30, or RNAV for the others.

Gary is also **one of the newest CBP facilities** in northwest Indiana and the Chicago metropolitan region.

You will need to give them 24 hours notice, and can call them on **773-948-6330.** Customs is also limited to a total of 20 people per aircraft (that's crew and passengers).

Already a decent size, and plans to expand are not popular with locals.

Send us your spies

Send us your Airport Spy reports for all these airports so we can share the gotchas, the things to know, contacts to contact and anything else useful.