

# CHICAGO BUSINESS

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## Midway could go private by yearend, FAA official says

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(Crain's) — Chicago's \$2.52-billion Midway Airport privatization deal is expected to win final clearance by yearend, the Federal Aviation Administration's top airports official said Wednesday.

"I think the deal will be approved," said D. Kirk Shaffer, associate administrator for airports at the FAA.

He added that he "can't say that conclusively" because the FAA has not yet received final documents from the city showing that the winning bidder was a group led by a unit of the Vancouver Airport Authority, Citibank and John Hancock Life Insurance.

But the FAA worked closely with the city last summer and reviewed in advance the structure of the deal, which all bidders were required to bid on intact. "The way they did it was pretty smart," Mr. Shaffer said in an interview after he appeared at the Aviation Finance Summit 2008, a conference in New York.

All that's needed now is a "quick cross-check" to make sure the terms of the deal haven't changed, and a review of the consortium's qualifications as an airport operator and federal grant recipient, he said.

As the first major U.S. airport to be privatized, Midway "will give us a concrete (idea of) what can be gained by the efficiencies a private operator brings," Mr. Shaffer said. "Passengers will see a much better experience in the quality of concessions, the level of service and the quality of services available to them."