



South Metro Airport Action Council

Senator Al Franken
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Representative Keith Ellison
Representative Betty McCollum
Representative Tim Walz
Washington, DC

Dear Friends:

Re: Our letter of December 29, 2010

The South Metro Airport Action Council (SMAAC) asked for your attention to FAA Re-Authorization and funding that may adversely impact MSP. As of February 6, SMAAC has received no response from FAA, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), or our US Senators or Representatives about MSP operations. For more background, please view our **Rates and Safety at MSP** blog at <http://www.quiettheskies.org/smaacforum/index.php?board=28.0>.

A reply or an informal acknowledgement would be greatly appreciated.

Congressional oversight of the Next Gen development continues but without reassurances by FAA of Next Gen schedules or capabilities. The development emphasis remains on *en route* air traffic control and navigation, still hindered by airline insistence on an agreement about cockpit GPS navigation (avionics) equipment and its use for air traffic control functions.

The airlines and the Federal government addressed the related needs for fuel efficiency and less congestion along the US eastern seaboard in 2006. The Bush Administration re-assigned military corridors over the Atlantic Ocean, gaining additional horizontal separations of north-south air traffic. Parts of the new corridors are not monitored by the FAA *en route* radar centers, and airliners maintain course and speed using GPS or, less often, other RNAV (Radio Navigation) systems.

Elsewhere in the continental US, no military corridors are available, but it is possible to somewhat reduce fuel consumption using GPS navigation avionics. When air traffic density allows, FAA en route controllers may permit airliners to fly more directly from airport to airport, or to use an indirect route that is wind-aided, to save fuel. If Next Gen safely allows lesser separations, the current plan is to realign air traffic along the Eastern US, increasing peak-hour demand at over a dozen airports before Next Gen airport air traffic control system improvements have even been tested

Unfortunately, air traffic control at MSP and other busy hub airports is complicated by arrivals approaching the airports from more directions and altitudes. So there is an added problem in that flight times and acceptance rates are more varied. A longer time in airport landing patterns at lower altitudes usually negates en route fuel savings, and this is exacerbated by delays more than it is avoided by higher runway-use rates. In our opinion, FAA has failed to establish the safety or efficiency of high runway rates at MSP (155 to 160 operations per hour), or any economic advantage there from.

Sincerely,

James R. Spensley
James R. Spensley,
President