



FORUM REPORT

SOUTH METRO AIRPORT ACTION COUNCIL

SUMMER 2010

Gubernatorial Candidates Virtual Forum

Future Use and Governance of MSP

For the first time, the SMAAC Forum was held on-line. The 2010 SMAAC Virtual Forum: opened July 12th and ran until the August 10th Primaries. **Over 700 visitors viewed the Forum, and 72 also registered and commented on the Forum.**

Five candidates for Governor posted statements, mostly down the middle: neither praising nor criticizing the Commission or the present situation at MSP. **Mark Dayton** was an exception, calling the current Commissioners *Delta Airline's lap-dogs, more committed to the airline's hub than to public needs.*

Comments suggested former legislators **Tom Emmer, Matt Entenza, and Margaret Anderson Kelliher** showed too little knowledge of expansion history and goings-on at MSP, excusing themselves and the Legislature from any blame for lack of oversight.

The DFL (Democratic) field was rated very competitive with House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, former US Senator Mark Dayton, and former Legislator Matt Entenza. Kelliher had the DFL Party endorsement.

The Republican Primary was lightly contested, with former State Legislator Tom Emmer the favorite. Frequent gadfly candidate Ole Savior, however, seemed to grasp that moderate Republican votes might be had. Savior said he would appoint former Governor Arne Carlson to Chair the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

This report was created and archived by the **South Metro Airport Action Council** based on input to the Virtual Forum.
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Former Republican moderate Tom Horner gained the Independence Party endorsement and hoped for a general election position between a more-liberal Democrat and a more-conservative Republican.

[Mark Dayton won the DFL Primary and was subsequently elected Governor of the State of Minnesota.]
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#### Citizens invited to comment.

The Virtual Forum concept allowed citizens to review presentations by the "panel" of candidates for weeks, extending the "question and answer" period greatly compared to the traditional town hall meetings.

All 13 candidates who filed for the Primary elections were invited to participate, and 7 accepted.

The candidates who accepted our invitation were sent topics in the form of questions on June 10 with an extended deadline of July 10 to reply. Each received instructions for posting their Opening Statements (Answers), which were available when the virtual forum was opened to the public.

We never received statements from 2 of the 7. Five statements were published for viewing and comments.

The on-line forum had security features for posting the candidate answers. SMAAC endeavored to maintain a "level playing field" among candidates by requesting that answers be independently posted before the official opening.

Anyone could access the virtual forum and view all the posts. Registered users (virtual members of the Forum audience) could simply click on a **Topic** and select **Reply**. Audience comments were posted after a quick propriety check by the Moderator(s).

## THE TOPICS

**1. Governance.** One of the Governor's responsibilities is appointing Metro Airports Commissioners. How would you go about selecting a Chair and Commissioners?

**2. What Next? Someday -- perhaps sooner rather than later** -- safety or other practical limits due to MSP's small physical size and urban location will be approached. Over \$3 billion was spent (1998-2004) to expand MSP with a new runway and other facilities (thought needed for economic growth through 2020).

MAC plans to dedicate the Lindbergh Terminal for the Delta Airlines hub without financial guarantees or covenants by Delta Airlines to either keep their hub at MSP or provide commerce and jobs offsetting the cost of facilities for connecting passengers. What alternatives to further expansion at MSP should be considered, and when?

**3. Health Studies.** In the past 3 years, several scientific studies have been published showing that living near a major airport is unhealthy. Most politicians are fixated on noise annoyances even though overflights are implicated with more heart disease, strokes, respiratory and other issues, and add to health costs. Because the new runway -- and higher rates -- led to more dispersion of flights, some at lower altitudes, than in the 1980's and 90's, a return to the 2004 operation level would increase noise and air pollution around MSP. What would you do as Governor to prevent worsening this problem?

**4. MSP Planning.** A long-term comprehensive plan (LTCP) for MSP expansion through 2030 was approved by the MAC April 19th. The plan for higher rates and a larger hub -- with less local passenger capacity than formerly forecast but more peak-hour operations -- assumes actions by Federal agencies, airlines now operating at MSP, airlines coming to MSP in the future, and cooperation by State agencies, Hennepin County, municipalities, and businesses. The Met Council (June 12) attached conditions to the plan. Would your administration review the MSP LTCP for 2030 and make changes?

## Mark Dayton's Answers

1. The Metropolitan Airports Commission is a board with making sure our infrastructure for air travel is meeting the needs of our economy now and into the future. In addition, the Metropolitan Airports Commission should also consider their impact on neighboring communities and the environment. While I do not have any person in mind for the chair of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, I would like someone focused on Minnesota's economic growth, community participation in decision-making, ensuring strong relations with labor and environmental protection; multi-dimensional responsibilities included.

While I am not proposing that any of the Metropolitan Airports Commissioners be elected, any discussion of changing the selection process should be done as the same question is considered for the Metropolitan Council.

2. As Governor, I believe that all our planning efforts should be dynamic and open to continuous improvement. As Governor, I will ensure Minnesota is best positioned to create or protect jobs for Minnesotans, provide quality, efficient service for our air travelers, include the voices of community members and ensure our environment is protected. All future planning efforts should be focused on keeping our region strong and competitive.

As Governor, I would ensure that planning for our airports is aligned closely with overall planning efforts. I am worried that updating the comprehensive plan without receiving financial or job guarantees from Delta Airlines is not the best strategy to compete in the 21st Century economy. When deciding how to move forward with substantial decisions like creating a new airport or enlarging our current site, I will do as I have always done, bring people together to solve complex issues.

3. As Governor, I will ask the Metropolitan Airports Commission to consider the health of Minnesotans as a factor when making our airport more competitive, efficient and community friendly. Possible options include electric luggage trolleys for the grounds crew, encouraging people to take transit alternatives to the airport, creating a plan to increase the energy efficiency of our airport facility and reducing other practices that add to the amount of pollution produced by our airport.

4. I have reviewed the MAC's assumptions and while I am confident that their projections are made with the best available information, I would ensure that any plan moving forward remains a dynamic plan that can be changed and improved as conditions change. As Governor, I would ensure that planning for our airports is closely aligned with the overall plan for our transportation infrastructure.

## Forum Participation

The Virtual Forum was open to anyone accessing the page, and the URL was advertised widely. After opening, public comments were made on the Forum itself and by replies to the Candidates' answers. Candidates could modify or amend their answers as well as reply to specific comments as the Forum ran for a month.

Public comments are denoted by > or >> in this Report.

### Other Candidate Responses:

#### Tom Emmer:

1. Governance. *The Metropolitan Airports Commission is charged with balancing the economic benefits of efficient and plentiful air travel with the social costs associated with ensuring that service.*

*Easy access to air travel is of vital importance to Minnesota's economy. Minnesota is home base for 34 fortune 500 companies, and innumerable corporations and individuals who rely on air travel to conduct their business.*

*Of course, there are social costs associated with the operation of airports, and it is important that residents in the vicinity of airports have a strong voice in the shaping of airport policies. While I frankly have not considered candidates for appointment to the MAC, I strongly believe it is important that Commissioners be sensitive to the concerns of residents.*

*I do not believe that all MAC commissioners should be elected, but I am always willing to listen.*

2. What Next? *We will always invite input from all stakeholders to ensure a fair, open, and complete process. The airport is a shared resource for the community, not for any particular entity. Decisions on the investment of billions of dollars need to be made in such a way that we are comfortable 30 or 50 years from now.*

3. Health Studies. See #2

4. MSP Planning. *(The) question suggests its own answer. Decisions regarding large, complicated infrastructure investments are made in conditions of considerable uncertainty. While it is impossible to constantly revise infrastructure investment strategies in light of the long lead times and considerable expense, it is also irresponsible not to consider revising them in light of significant deviance from assumed conditions.*

> Reply of July 16, 2010. Britain is curbing airport growth to aid (the global) climate, (but) according to the NY Times *In the United States, the number of general aviation hours is forecast to grow an average of 1.8 percent a year, and to be 60 percent greater by 2025 than it is now, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. While airlines have worked hard to improve airplane efficiency, those efforts are dwarfed by the upward trend in flying. This issue should be addressed.*

The Metropolitan Council considered re-classifying Anoka and Flying Cloud (airports) so they can accommodate larger jets. Neither community wants this.

#### Tom Horner:

1. Governance. *The MAC requires expertise, not politics. We gain accountability by holding the appointed officers responsible for their actions on these kinds of boards.*

2. What Next? *As the Twin Cities grows the metro area stakeholders should convene to discuss options for MSP. Any additional or new airport should be fully supported by all parties and provide for the inevitable growth that will be required to accommodate a growing metro area. Any reduction or closure should be balanced against the economic value of a bustling airport hub.*

3. Health Studies. *All environmental regulations should be enforced to minimize health concerns. Any additional legislation should be considered in light of the best available technology and research.*

4. MSP Planning. *A long-term plan for MSP expansion through 2030 was approved by the MAC April 19th. Would you suggest changes in the plan if:*

- *The State demographic and economic forecasts differ from MAC's? **Yes***
- *New FAA air traffic control systems based on GPS (Next Gen) are delayed? **Possibly***
- *New FAA crew training reviews and aircraft inspections are delayed? **Possibly***
- *Runway incursions, near-misses, or accidents increase? **Yes***

#### Representative comments on Horner's answers

> *This kind of Board?* The Metropolitan Airports Commission was created by statute and has a unique and unusual charter.

Horner continued.

The checks and balances intended to apply -- *appointment coordination with area legislators, CIP review by Met Council, required formal public administrative hearings and records, reporting to and oversight by the Legislator, zoning agreements with local government* -- are not enforced or can be disengaged by various contracts and agreements. >I understand the Commission is a "public corporation." But I don't understand what a public corporation is in practice.

The Commission has, according to their 2010 budget book, a quarter of a billion dollars in annual revenue -- more from "concessions" or airport enterprises such as parking than from airline use fees. In 2005, airline fees were greater than concessions. Dollars from concessions were used recently to (subsidize) airlines (using MSP).

Airlines do not pay property taxes directly or through MAC for leased facilities at MSP. This is a heck of a deal for Delta and the other airlines!

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Margaret Anderson Kelliher

1. Governance. *The MAC has multi-dimensional responsibilities including making sure our infrastructure for air travel is meeting the needs of our economy now and into the future.*

In addition, the Metropolitan Airports Commission should also consider their impact on neighboring communities and the environment. The chair of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (should be) focused on Minnesota's economic growth, community participation in decision-making, ensuring strong relations with labor and environmental protection. While I am not proposing that any of the Metropolitan Airports Commissioners be elected, any discussion of changing the selection process should be done as the same question is considered for the Metropolitan Council.

2. What Next? *Planning efforts should be dynamic and open to continuous improvement. ... As Governor, I would ensure that planning for our airports is aligned closely with overall planning efforts.*

I am worried that updating the comprehensive plan without receiving financial or job guarantees from Delta Airlines is not the best strategy to compete in the 21st Century economy.

When deciding how to move forward with substantial decisions like creating a new airport or enlarging our current site, I'd bring people together.

3. Health Studies. *I will ask the Metropolitan Airports Commission to consider the health of Minnesotans as a factor when making our airport more competitive, efficient and community friendly.*

Possible options include electric luggage trolleys for the ground crews, encouraging transit alternatives, increase the energy efficiency of our airport facility, and reducing pollution produced by our airport.

4. MSP Planning. *I have reviewed the MAC's assumptions and while I am confident that their projections are made with the best available information, I would ensure that any plan moving forward remains a dynamic plan that can be changed and improved as conditions change. As Governor, I would ensure that planning for our airports is closely aligned with the overall Metro plan for transportation infrastructure.*

Representative comments on Kelliher's answers

> *The MAC should also consider the airport neighbors. So Kelliher knows or suspects they haven't been -- all the time she's been Speaker and supposedly overseeing the MAC?*

> *The DFL door-knocker pushing Kelliher literature at me didn't have any answers about airport noise, high fares, or how these bear on the Governor Primary. I wish the Candidates would answer our questions on-line!*

> *Your lack of expressed concern about MSP and MAC in handouts and ads is not only an issue for you, but also for DFL candidates -- incumbents included -- who support you but aren't mentioning MSP, its air pollution, noise, and not enough service, cost and quantity. After the way MAC and Northwest have acted for the past 10 years, our representatives all over Minneapolis should be enraged.*

> *What about the study on relieving MSP and neighboring regional airports like Rochester, St Cloud ... The Met Council's 2030 Transportation Plan for Aviation.(is) expanding at MSP again, while regional airports like St Cloud are begging for some of Delta's flights.*

(Hub airline dominance) is keeping (Minnesota) economically at a disadvantage.(This) is attributable to insufficient transportation. Companies (build) where there's (affordable) infrastructure.

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## Ole Savior:

1. Governance. Appointees should have past experience and knowledge of MAC policies, an understanding of airline finances and the costs of running the airport in a responsible, profitable and positive manner. We need qualified people making decisions (and) I would appoint Former Governor Arne Carlson as MAC Chair.

Electing commissioners would (benefit) the public and the MAC (appointments) made (as political favors) are not to the favor of MAC operations.

2. What Next? Delta has many responsibilities to Minnesota including all the agreements made in the past.

I prefer to dedicate MSP airport to (larger) passenger airplanes, and to divert smaller airplane traffic to the reliever airports. The reason: operational safety issues (caused) by smaller aircraft (among heavier) aircraft at a busy commercial hub like MSP.

3. Health Studies. We will listen to the problems that residents have and we will do everything possible within reason to help solve these problems. We will try to anticipate the problems that MAC will encounter in the foreseeable future and compensate those people with airport related health issues. We plan to improve MACs public image in our upcoming administration.

4. MSP Planning. The overall answer is "yes". Many of these issues are circumstantial and need to be reviewed by the MAC members along with input of their concerns to determine the best solution. Our goal is to address and solve these problems to make our airport the very best in the United States.

## General Comments

>Reply of July 12, 2010. Why would Entenza and Hakeem agree to be on this Forum and have nothing to contribute?

>>SMAAC: Even with Federal and local safety issues, new regulations about passenger's rights, and Met Council placing conditions on MSP capital planning, the airports commission seems to fly below the media and campaign radars. You think MSP issues are worth discussing in the gubernatorial campaigns, obviously. There are eight candidates who don't. If you contact the campaigns, perhaps you will get an answer.

>Reply of July 17, 2010. Can SMAAC provide a little more info on the Commissioners. Senator Dayton is my only source in the forum about this.

>>SMAAC, July 19, 2010, There is a statutory requirement that the Governor's appointments are coordinated with Legislators based on geographical territories.

>>From the MAC web-site: *The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) owns and operates the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) and six smaller "Reliever" airports within the metro area. The MAC Chairman and 14 Commissioners meet monthly to represent the interests of the community in decisions related to these airports.*

*The MAC's chairman and 12 of the 14 commissioners are appointed by the Governor of Minnesota. Eight of the 12 commissioners represent districts within the metropolitan area, while the remaining four represent the interests of outstate Minnesota.*

*In addition, one commissioner is appointed by the mayor of the City of Minneapolis and another is appointed by the mayor of the City of St. Paul to represent those cities.*

*The commissioners' four-year terms are staggered.*

>Reply of August 10. I want to know why I can't post under Hakeem and Entenza so that they'd be notified that no answers to a survey about issues that have plagued my neighborhood for a lifetime costs them votes.

>>SMAAC: Both accepted our invitation and were given logs to post their answers. Neither of them responded to repeated requests to post their answers --even after the July 12 startup date of the Forum.

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The South Metro Airport Action Council sincerely thanks the Candidates, their staffs and representatives. Public comments were also thoughtful and welcome.

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