



Mr. Daniel Boivin, Chair
Metropolitan Airports Commission
6020 – 28th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55417

May 20, 2011

Dear Commissioners,

As you may know, SMAAC's May 2, 2011 letter to the Commission was referred by Chair Boivin to the Noise Manager, Chad Leqve. Mr. Leqve responded by letter May 18, 2011. We were hoping for a review of recent health studies and a response by Commissioners representing residents of neighborhoods around MSP.

Mr. Leqve instead suggested that SMAAC contact the Federal Inter-Agency Committee on Aviation Noise or request an appearance before the Noise Oversight Committee.

With respect, neither of these actions would inform the Commission of the elevated health risks reported in several epidemiology studies in other cities.

SMAAC was already aware that the current noise compatibility programs at MSP are thought by MAC staff to be "in compliance with Federal guidelines for noise mitigation programs. But we first asked the Commission, in 2002, to review scientific studies correlating school performance decreases and health problem increases around urban airports. By Federal guideline, this evidence ought to have been part of the Part 150 application. In our May 2 letter we noted that new studies found health risks were increased by *overflight noise much lower than the average noise levels supposedly present within 60 to 70 DNL areas.*

The World Health Organization's Report citing several studies, some completed as recently as 2008, compares and organizes findings and provides summaries and conclusions applicable, we think, to Commission policy as well as U.S. policy, on overflights. Surely the Commission's policy decisions and plans would be better if guided by knowledge of the studies.

We doubt that mitigation by degrees of sound insulation alone is adequate or cost-effective. We believe the health studies provide evidence that our doubts are justified. Mr. Leqve's assertion that SMAAC's "*focus on aircraft noise completely disregards other ... noise sources*" is unwarranted. The studies scientifically included traffic noise and other urban noise sources, ambient noise levels before and after overflights, and other land-use factors. *Overflight noise correlated with health risks after other noise sources and variables were accounted for statistically.*

We believe it is appropriate for the full Commission to consider the probable health and health care cost impacts of larger hub banks, more frequent flights, and additional noise exposure forecast to result from further MSP expansion. It is also appropriate, we believe, to assure that the benefits of safe, sufficient and affordable air transportation that may result from the long-term comprehensive plan implementation are not only realized, but also compared to the overall public cost of additional operations. The actual public cost of airport operations far exceeds the monies invested at the airport.

However, SMAAC did appear at the May 18, 2011 NOC meeting, and Mr. Quincy's request for a discussion of recent health studies at the next NOC meeting was adopted. This will not necessarily result in any additional effort to review and understand the implications of the health studies or report findings to the Commissioners. Based on prior experience, our expectations for timely action through NOC are very low. But perhaps such a public discussion will be illuminating. Some NOC delegates indirectly represent residents and others represent industry interests in continuing or increasing overflights.

Sincerely,

James R. Spensley

James R. Spensley, President,
South Metro Airport Action Council (SMAAC)