

South Metro Airport Action Council
PO Box 19036
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March 23, 2010

Mr. Peter Bell, Chair
Metropolitan Council
390 Robert Street North,
St. Paul, MN 55101-1805

E-mail: data.center@metc.state.mn.us

Dear Chair Bell:

The South Metro Airport Action Council, a not-for-profit citizens' association monitoring operations at MSP since 1968, has commented in detail on the MSP LTCP Update. There was no acknowledgment of our analysis in Mr. Probst's presentations to Met Council. There is general agreement with our financial analysis in your current Transportation Plan. We do not know if the Council members received or read our comments to MAC.

At the Met Council website, you are featuring presentations about the MSP Long-Term Comprehensive Plan originating with the Metropolitan Airports Commission. We are concerned about the approval process and the adequacy of the Met Council's review. The MAC did not conduct any meaningful public hearings on the LTCP, only a couple of "open house" presentations and limited discussion. Input was not solicited from the State Demographer or other State agencies.

Neither Met Council nor MAC addressed the 1996 law limiting MSP expansion based on 2020 forecasts. The MAC's 20 year forecasts (2010-2030) are based on national data only, in a time of both economic uncertainty and regional disparity. The projected demand for gates and slots is based on assumptions about Delta Airlines' plans, rather than on Delta's minimal commitments recently negotiated in revised covenants associated with the State loan and lease agreements.

There is no commitment from Delta to provide the local passenger capacity based on 1998 or 2008 forecasts for 2020 economic need. The airline's short-term plans involve more operations by regional subsidiaries or contract operators using smaller regional jets (fewer passengers per operation). This would further increase safety risks at MSP, particularly as the stated goal is "... reducing delays" compared to scheduled operations, therefore higher rates.

The MSP LTCP assumes, incorrectly, that operational rates at MSP can be continued indefinitely without Federal investments in improved ground and air traffic control systems. In fact, the LTCP adds gates in the next few years in anticipation of Delta Airlines restoring its hub operations and high rates before 2015. This course threatens safety -- if the hub is reestablished to 2005 levels -- or inadequate revenue from operations -- if the hub is not restored.

We therefore urge the Met Council to direct MAC to revise the LTCP into two parts, 2011-2020 and 2021- 2030. The Met Council, we believe, has already approved the 2010 CIP projects at MSP. SMAAC's full analysis can be found at <http://quiettheskies.org>.

Sincerely,

James R. Spensley
President, SMAAC