



NEWS

LETTER

SOUTH METRO AIRPORT ACTION COUNCIL

AUTUMN 2010 WITH BLOG SUPPLEMENT

THE 2010 SMAAC FALL FORUM

RATES & SAFETY AT MSP

WITH US CONGRESSMAN KEITH ELLISON

6:30 PM, THURSDAY DECEMBER 9, 2010

RICHFIELD LUTHERAN CHURCH--60TH & NICOLLET

Citizens invited to comment.

More information about the upcoming Fall Forum can be found posted on-line at our web-site on the public bulletin board.

RATES & SAFETY AT MSP

Go to www.quiettheskies.org and click on the red button.

Near-Miss May Stir Up FAA Investigation

On September 16, US Airways Flight 1848, an Airbus A320, took off on runway 30R at MSP, and Bemidji Aviation Flight BMJ46, a Beech 99 cargo flight, was taking off on parallel runway 30L at the same time. The A320 was directed by a controller in the FAA MSP Tower to turn left, toward the South parallel runway. The turn quickly covered the half-mile over to the C99. They nearly collided.

An FAA spokesperson, Elizabeth Isham Cory, said that FAA will look at "... ways of improving controller-pilot communications." SMAAC hopes so. We have complained at least since 2005 that high rates -- too little time to clarify communications -- are an unnecessary risk at MSP. But controller-pilot communications cannot readily be improved to cope with situations of this kind. Detecting dangerous situations in time for a controller to warn the pilot(s) is the very basis for air traffic control systems. Intervals should be increased; peak rates should be capped.

[Continued on page 3]

Heart Attacks Linked to Overflights

Living under a flight path increases the chances of a fatal heart attack, a study of 4.6 million people in Switzerland suggests. The Medical Journal *Epidemiology* published the peer-reviewed study (See November 2010 - Volume 21 - Issue 6 - pp 829-836). The study was titled "Aircraft Noise, Air Pollution, and Mortality From Myocardial Infarction."

Aircraft noise was associated with the incidence of fatalities, proportional to both the sound level and the number of years of exposure. The increased risk of heart attack is not explained by exposure to particulate matter air pollution, education, or socioeconomic status; only to the place of residence or employment. So the elevated risk applies broadly to neighborhoods around any major airport where the years and levels of overflight noise are similar.

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Safety -- a Reprise

By Jim Spensley, President

SMAAC's interest was first shifted from noise to flight safety by events in May 2005. Then-Senator Mark Dayton was speaking at our Spring Forum entitled *Aviation Safety and Environmental Protection Sacrificed to Corporate Greed?* The answer was "Yes." The Forum was a few days after two NWA planes collided at MSP.

A disabled Northwest Airlines DC-9 was allowed to taxi on its own to the MSP Lindbergh terminal after an emergency landing on Runway 22. The DC-9 crossed re-opened runway 12L-30R (after looking both ways, we presume) and routinely shut down its left engine. As it neared Gate G-9, it had lost all hydraulic pressure and collided with a Northwest Airlines A-319 that was being pulled back from the gate. There were injuries but fortunately no fatalities.

In My Opinion

Later that summer, SMAAC formally asked the airports commission and the FAA Tower Manager to "review communications and accountability and study how incomplete reports and misunderstood messages led to the collision." There was no discussion. The staff Memo to the Commission held that MAC should not cooperate or approach FAA because NTSB is investigating. It was read aloud by the *Noise Manager* who said SMAAC was "out-of-line" for even asking MAC to act.

Here we are again: a near mid-air collision this time. The fundamental issue is **more aircraft at the same time in the vicinity of hubs**. It would be safer and more economical to maintain more manageable intervals by undoing the peak-hours concentrations of flights at the busiest hubs. It was discovered in 2007 that dozens of near misses went unreported each year at DFW, the American Airlines hub in Dallas, Texas. FAA redefined "near miss." Reported runway incursions increased steadily for years. FAA redefined "runway incursion." Instead of slowing things down during major construction periods, in 2007 and 2009, high rates were continued using runways with conflicting headings.

In March 2006, FAA's Air Traffic Control Tower at MSP allowed several airliners to depart using Runway 35 because snow removal was incomplete on the main runways. There were no planned taxi routes to the South end of the new runway at the time and visibility was low.

For two decades, NTSB has made ground safety systems a critical need for all commercial airports. FAA budgeted and conducted extensive R&D on this problem without much success.

In 2008, movements on the ground at airports were considered the *most dangerous part of air travel*. Ground congestion is a problem, in itself, and also can create hazards, such as runway incursions, or runway debris or emergency fly-arounds and re-directions.

The sad but true story is that FAA had summarily canceled incremental system improvements and development of supplemental ground-safety systems in 2006.

Rate regulation is now in place at metropolitan New York-New Jersey airfields, which only had half-as-many operations per hour as O'Hare and MSP before the rate reductions.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting has been continued to December 9, 2010 at Richfield Lutheran Church after the Forum

Three Directors' terms expire this year, but the By-Laws provide that Directors serve until replaced so that a minimal legal Board of five Directors is always available to conduct SMAAC business.

SMAAC By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation also state that 5 to 9 Directors may serve on the Board, so 3 vacant seats also can be filled by election at this Annual Meeting.

If you can serve as a Board member or want to nominate someone, call Jim Spensley at 612.824.9988.

Metro Air Passenger Capacity Remains Cloudy

Local economic growth was said to be the critical planning factor for MSP Expansion in 1996 law and in the 1998 Record of Decision. In June 2010, the Metropolitan Council attached conditions to the MSP plans, vaguely noting questions raised by SMAAC over a year ago as the LTCP progressed through the airports commission.

Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and the 2010 version of the MSP Long-Term Comprehensive Plan for 2030 (LTCP) **do not adequately address the local passenger capacity needed for projected economic growth in the Metro.**

Airport flight capacity increases are not necessarily increases in passenger capacity and, at a hub airport like MSP, passenger capacity is shared between local and connecting passengers. Under the conditions as they are today at MSP, the useful local passenger capacity for MSP in 2020 and 2030 is not specified and is not even a fixed proportion of the projected annual flight use.

The total number of passengers departing MSP is **not a measure of demand**: the supply of fairly priced tickets here is limited by connecting passenger use, determined by national competition at best, or airline collaborations, at worst. Airline reports of originating passengers are subject to various errors, and include some connecting passengers.

MSP annual flight use depends more on MSP flight capacity and MAC financial plans (airline fees) than on economic growth in Minnesota or the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Transportation policy planning should be determined here, not in Atlanta or Washington. MSP and Met Council need to re-focus on operations meeting economic growth and population increases in the Twin Cities.

The public interest in safe, green, and healthy operations should be given far more consideration and budget.

Met Council may also be watching passenger capacity and noise and pollution, but with little effect unless plans are revised to be more meaningful.

Passenger Capacity The plan should be safe and sufficient local service, not linked to annual flight use. Airline use of MSP flight capacity has more to do with the Delta hub; an upward trend in airline use of MSP is not providing sufficient service for local economic needs.

Noise and Mitigation Noise studies should be based on noise exposure maps, not an essentially arbitrary number of annual operations.

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## Near-Miss May Stir Up An FAA Investigation

[Continued from Page 1]

The systems at MSP have been bumping up against controller-pilot communications limits for 10 or 15 years, and SMAAC believes that simultaneous operations on three runways have become too routine. In messages to SMAAC, MSP Executive Director Jeff Hamiel noted that simultaneous use of runways is common here, even when there is no need and there would be no significant delay.

According to a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) press statement. "The flights (crossed) paths... one-half mile past the end of runway 30L. Recorded radar data indicate that the two aircraft had only 50 to 100 feet of vertical separation as they passed each other" unseen in the clouds. (The recorded tracks had been displayed on controller consoles, but the near-miss report was from the A320 pilot.)

A MAC spokesperson made this "over wetlands" not buildings, a transparent attempt to minimize the seriousness of the near-miss. If there had been a collision there would have been several big pieces and a lot of small pieces falling over a large area including businesses, parks, highways, and homes.

There were no reports of damage or injuries as a result of the incident, according to NTSB. Passengers on the A320 were not interviewed.

Officials could investigate further. The public is concerned because simultaneous runway operations are common, and the regional airline pilots now using MSP are less-experienced, less-trained, and less familiar with MSP.

Reportedly, the A320's Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) issued climb instructions -- noted by the A320 crew after passing so close that the Beech 99 was heard in the A320. The TCAS is forward-looking radar with little "spread," so the C99 wasn't detected off to the left until the turn was completed.

Apparently radio conversations between the MSP Tower and the A320 pilot were recorded by an independent monitoring station and sent to Minnesota Public Radio.

NTSB did the near-miss investigations because FAA controller errors were alleged. A few weeks later, NTSB issued a preliminary statement to the effect that a controller error was the likely cause. A public probable cause report may eventually be published.

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MAC Gets a Buck or Two More from Local Travelers

At their August meeting, MAC voted 9-4 to raise the pick-up fees paid to MAC by its off-site parking competitors. Passed on to their clients, the pick-up fee would make off-site parking cost about the same as the recently-raised MSP ramp fees.

SMAAC spoke against the increase on behalf of the local consumer: connecting passengers don't park and airline employees park free near leased-from-MAC-cheaply buildings.

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Where Mergers Could Threaten Delta

By Bob Friskney

The recent merger of United with Continental and Southwest with AirTran shrinks the number of national players from seven to five, with unknown impact on Delta's fortress hubs.

At MSP, for example, the two merged carriers serve only 10% of MSP passengers. And, since MSP is merely a spoke in the others' hub systems, Delta's dominance here at MSP doesn't appear threatened.

A far greater threat would appear to lie at Delta's home hub, Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson, where Southwest-AirTran has indicated plans to seek a bigger slice of Delta's pie than AirTran's current 22%.

United and Continental completed their \$3.2-billion legal phase of their merger. Each has become a wholly owned subsidiary of United Continental Holdings, with Headquarters in Chicago, and substantial operations still in Houston.

CEO Jeff Smisek expects the merger to generate as much as \$1.2 billion in "net annual synergies" by 2013 in additional annual revenue and cost savings. Smisek said layoffs among the companies' 80,000 employees will be "minimal."

As the largest airline, United-Continental serves 371 destinations in 59 countries, with 5,811 daily departures, and 144 million passengers a year. Of its eight domestic hubs, Cleveland is most likely to be scaled back. Other hubs are in Chicago (O'Hare), Denver, Houston (Bush), Los Angeles, Newark, San Francisco and Washington (Dulles).

AirTran-Southwest's \$1.2-billion hookup is designed to accelerate growth through former AirTran hubs in Atlanta, Orlando, Milwaukee and Baltimore, and introducing service in 20 more markets, according to Aviation Week. With increased focus on business, Southwest CEO Gary Kelly envisions a \$2-billion (or 20%) growth in annual revenues, along with \$400 million in net annual synergies from the merger.

The combined low-cost carriers will have 43,000 employees. They expect to close the transaction by mid-2011, and become fully integrated under a single operating certificate in 20 months.



MAC Gets a Buck or Two

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SMAAC pointed out that off-site parking customers are all local or Minnesota taxpayers. But it didn't convince most Commissioners that parking fees paid to off-site lots and passed on to MAC in their fees and the increased fees for on-airport ramps taxes locals.

iMAC staff said that there is enough "elasticity" in the off-site parking business for the operators to continue operations at a profit, by raising prices. A Commissioner said that other transportation companies do not exclusively serve MSP, so it was "equitable" for off-site parking companies to pay more.

One of the off-site parking operators called the raise "greed" because the fees are against stated MAC policy "not to exceed" associated airport costs. Another said the fees were raised because off-airport parking competes with the airport's own parking business, even though the off-site firms pay property taxes, license fees, *et cetera* to governments and MAC does not.

Speaking to the Commission, SMAAC President Jim Spensley said "The people parking at MSP or at off-site lots, as well as the travelers paying premium fares to Delta, are in fact local taxpayers. The connecting passengers -- the reason for the hub being here -- are not Minnesota taxpayers and the airline executives and headquarters staff is no longer here either, thanks to the merger and job cuts. Local consumers are picking up part of the connecting-passengers' tab again."

Dan Boivin, the Minneapolis Mayor's representative on the MAC, spoke in favor of the raise.

Airline Hubs may be a Federal Budget Buster

In a letter to conservative US Rep and Senator-elect Mark Kirk, a Park Ridge, IL citizens' group argued for cuts in the FAA budget based on reducing flights via the now-fewer and too busy hubs.

- *Often re-modeling hub airports with public money just to match airline flight changes is inefficient.*
- *Contract-operators are not only less safe, but increase FAA and NTSB costs to certify the regional fleets, inspect their maintenance and training, respond to their higher incident rates, and investigate their more frequent crashes.*
- *High hub rates (operations per hour) and more gates lead to less safety and more population exposure to noise and pollution.*

The big airlines are making a fuss about GPS navigation to supplement FAA *en route* systems to "save fuel and travel time" by deviating from radar flight corridors. Congress should be able to figure out that the average fuel savings is less than one-half hour burn time per leg. More one-stop-at-a-hub flights involve hour-longer overall burns, a landing and a take-off, and hub-airport arrival delays – *more fuel use*.

Major-airline cost-cutting by assigning flights to contract operators led to long aircrew commutes. Major airline jobs were replaced with jobs that require less training, get less supervision, discriminate more often, and contribute less to the economy in taxes and spending.

These public subsidies to airlines, which they report as "cost savings," are often paid out in bonuses instead of invested in better training, aircraft or equipment.



Unions Lose in Attempts to Organize at Delta Airlines

By Dick Saunders

Three attempts by unions to organize more than 33,000 Delta workers failed in 2010. One more election was under way and a fifth pending as of December 2010. All of the organizing efforts involve former Northwest unions.

On Nov. 3, after a months-long contentious campaign, flight attendants voted down a third organizing attempt by the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) in nine years by a margin of 51-49%. Of the 20,000 Delta cabin staff, AFA represented 7,000, inherited in the 2008 NWA merger. The union said it plans to appeal the outcome, claiming "unprecedented intimidation" by the company.

Northwest's stingy wages policy led to its employees organizing. The unions were not the only reporters of management interference in the Delta employee votes. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) also reported problems.

On Nov. 18, baggage handlers and cargo warehouse workers voted against affiliating with the International Association of Machinists (IAM) by 53-47%. Of the 13,104 eligible to vote, 81% did. The union said it would appeal.

Four days later, Delta stock clerks turned down the IAM by 72-28%. Some 90% of 660 eligible workers voted. The IAM said it may file interference charges.

Voting by customer service agents was also concluded in December.

On Nov. 19, the IAM filed for a representation election among 2,200 office and clerical workers. To be approved by the National Mediation Board, 35% of such employees are required to show interest. That election isn't expected until 2011.

There were numerous differences in employee status between Delta and Northwest. Delta had more salaried employees, more subsidiary employees, and more contractors holding jobs that were similar or the same as jobs worked by union wage-earners at Northwest. In the airline industry, pilots, flight engineers, and mechanics were salaried but unionized at union airlines. These "professional"

unions were more "CIO" than "AFL," and had national industry standards for training, work rules, and rest periods rather than specific airline policies.

Now hundreds of senior pilots, flight attendants, and flight engineers will be joining mechanics in retirement or unemployment as jobs are sent off-shore or contracted out. If Delta's employees foolishly thought they could avoid being laid off or retired by voting against the unions, it was because of what they were being told by Delta's line managers, and illegal, some say.

Union organizing after the Delta-Northwest merger was noted in SMAAC on-line blogs chronologically. Follow-up reports, after January 2, 2011, remain posted.

Area Navigation (RNAV) and MSP Departure Noise

By Jim Spensley

The MSP Noise Oversight Committee (NOC) has been playing along since 2008 with their MAC staff adviser, Chad Leque, about using navigation aids to reduce noise exposure.

Leque asserts that FAA and airlines will cooperate in keeping departing flights over industrial noise corridors, river valleys, and other less-impact areas on the ground around MSP.

SMAAC doubts that it is fair -- or technically correct -- to then "model" departure flight paths for noise exposure contour maps.

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NWA Machinists Get \$13 Million Settlement from Delta, December 2010,

As the National Mediation Board (NMB) investigated Delta's widespread and allegedly illegal interference that prevented employees from voting in fair elections, the Machinists Union (IAM) continues to protect the interests of pre-merger NWA employees.

The IAM has successfully negotiated a \$13 million payment on December 31, 2010 for Northwest Airlines Ramp and Stores employees for deferrals made during Northwest's bankruptcy. Delta Air Lines paid this December 30, 2010, in the last payroll.

Although Delta Air Lines said it would no longer fund the negotiated pension plan for pre-merger Northwest IAM members, IAM negotiated continued funding pending the outcome of the investigation and possible new elections.

Flight Attendants Sue Delta on Unionization Vote (December)

The Association of Flight Attendants is claiming the company interfered in a recent union election, according to an AP story datelined Atlanta today.

The union narrowly lost the election to represent 20,000 Delta flight attendants earlier this month. Union officials immediately claimed the company improperly influenced flight attendants to vote against the union.

Delta says the union is disregarding the will of the majority of flight attendants. The airline says the interference claim will keep it from matching pay and benefits between flight attendants who came from Northwest and those who have been at Delta all along. Delta bought Northwest in 2008.

The National Mediation Board will either dismiss them or order a re-vote.

RNAV and MSP Departure Noise

[Continued from Page 5]

Noise Implications. Leqve told NOC that 80% of aircraft using MSP (circa 2008) are equipped with some form of area navigation system. Route deviations are corrected by autopilots more rapidly than by pilots following a map display or looking out a window. Leqve's implication, *that 4 of every 5 departures could be constrained over non-sensitive areas*, is way off.

If FAA allows RNAV or GPS departures, it will be flight by flight, precision routes have to be input to autopilots and tested. The input data has to be adapted to more than a few autopilots and aircraft. Airlines have to set up flight plans taking the precise routes into account along with runway use, wind speed and direction, and enter the routes in the cockpit. The flight planner may not know which runway will be used for take-off

This is not why airlines use RNAV or would use global positioning satellite fixes.

Airlines can be expected to maintain departure corridors only when it is fuel-efficient and convenient. FAA ATC can be expected to assign departure headings based first on matching airspace to traffic, that is, if 20 aircraft are departing in the next

At a hub, departures contend with arrivals for airspace, and FAA is not likely to allow the least-noise departures to slow down operations. Pilots may or may not dial in precise routes on departure; FAA would order dispersed departure routes for close successive departures using the same runway.

SMAAC therefore doubts that one in twenty, much less one in five departures would be assigned to low-impact departure routes and that precision routes would be planned for five to ten percent of MSP departures.

Less noise exposure isn't a priority.

Area Navigation Primer: Area Navigation is using any of several types of fixed points for references in an aircraft's flight navigation systems.

The fixed points may be active transmitters (the "R" in RNAV was first for "radio"). The stations or "beacons" allow pilots or avionics systems to use these radio signals for course computation. Without avionics pilots are flying directly toward or away from the beacon; with avionics, the autopilot follows a set course within the coverage of navigation signals. RNAV is also used to "update" an inertial (laser gyroscope) system in flight.

RNAV systems compute the aircraft's present position using the relative angle or distance to the stations. Of course the accuracy of and time between computations determine how closely the aircraft follows the planned course. See Note 2.

Using RNAV – GPS -- course deviations can be corrected without seeing anything from the cockpit and without corrections from air traffic controllers. This can reduce flight distance, lower route congestion, and allow instrument flight plans toward airports without beacons. See Note 1.

That is why airlines use GPS.

History: Area Navigation in the United States is limited to systems and arrays approved and monitored by the FAA, starting in the late 1960s, with a few radio beacons and planned routes. The first routes were published in the 1970s. when LORAN-C (Long-Range Aircraft Navigation) stations were set up in North America and used for route-keeping during longer flights. LORAN-C receivers and computers were cheap and used mostly for general aviation (low speed and low altitude).

Multiple aircraft were often following the same routes, and "drift" (perpendicular to the planned route) and "closure" (along the planned route) exceeded safe margins. *More* airport air traffic control was necessary.

Airspace is more limited around busy (hub) airports: RNAV cannot be used for arriving flights and must be coordinated flight-by-flight for departures with air traffic controllers.

In the last few years, RNAV accuracy was enhanced by faster computers and satellite

stations. The Global Positioning Satellites system (GPS) is often used to fly across oceans and polar areas instead of inertial navigation (laser gyroscopes).

Airport ATC, however, still controls speed and spacing for landings.

Note 1: The typical displacements perpendicular to the planned route are on the order of yards, not miles, and if rates are limited or successive departures excluded, modern airliners should be able to follow low-impact routes and avoid obstacles -- unless they are in a hurry, or have to deviate by ATC direction due to rates and airspace congestion.

Note 2: While GPS systems are common for ground vehicle navigation they offer little promise for automation on the ground. In flight, progress along "jet ways" can be automated if margins (separations) are large and speeds are the same. This is good, and, overall, better or more dynamic use of airspace can be safely implemented. But these advances are not sufficient for air traffic control en route and the plan for NextGen to maintain routes, or for aircraft to keep safe separations by broadcasting their position to all other aircraft, are probably over-stated.

Note to Researchers:

The unexpected volume of information posted on-line in SMAAC's Bulletin Board Forum has proved to be a challenge.

Stories and comments weave in-and-out, not only over time, but also by reflecting a new aspect of another story.

To be blunt, our News Letter cannot keep up as an archive. Some stories will be filed elsewhere on the SMAAC Web-site. Use the web-site search engine.

The Editors