



# NEWS

# LETTER

## SOUTH METRO AIRPORT ACTION COUNCIL

SUMMER 2010 WITH BLOG SUPPLEMENT

### Note to Readers

In June this year, 2010, SMAAC created a "blog" as a vehicle for continuing news and for comments on the postings by SMAAC Members. This is the first, experimental, conversion of the E-News Letter to a conventional static publication.

### **Virtual Forum Conducted with Gubernatorial Candidates**

The 2010 SMAAC Virtual Forum: Future Use and Governance of MSP opened July 12th and ran until the August 10<sup>th</sup> Primaries.

Five candidates for Governor posted statements, mostly down the middle: neither praising nor criticizing the Commission or the present situation at MSP. Other candidates on Primary ballots declined to participate.

**Mark Dayton** was an exception, calling the current Commissioners mostly "Delta Airline's lap-dogs" more committed to the airline's hub than to public needs.

Early comments suggested that the three former Legislators (Emmer, Entenza, and 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** winning easily. 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. Carlson has been critical of ultra-conservatives and Emmer's suggestions that airline and environmental regulations are too strict.

Former Republican moderate Tom Horner has gained the Independence Party endorsement and may have a good general election position between a more-liberal Democrat and a more-conservative Republican.

### **Met Council Approved the Long-Term Comprehensive Plan for MSP Expansion**

The Metropolitan Council attached six conditions to the MSP 2030 Long-Term Comprehensive Plan (LTCP) June 14 without dissent and but a single question.

Polly Bowles, a Met Council member from Edina, asked about the capacity study required two years in advance of the year more than 540,000 operations are forecast for MSP by Condition 2. Met Council staff planner Chauncey Case explained that the LTCP assumed adequate safe airfield capacity so the plan was presented as not over-investing in gates and terminal improvements until needed by the airlines forecasting their future operations.

## More MSP Hub Flights; Unsafe And Insufficient Local Air Service?

By Jim Spensley, President

It is getting tiresome reminding the State Government that our Legislature found that a 25% *safe capacity increase* was needed to support Minnesota economic growth as projected for 2020. That Finding has been mostly ignored for 10 years. And part of the reason it has been is Governor Pawlenty's devotion to Northwest Airlines executives and the mistaken notion promoted by MAC Chairs Tigwell and Lanners that more flights around the same time is a good thing.

### In My Opinion

MSP -- land area only 5.3 sq. miles -- is smaller than almost all US commercial airports, absolutely the smallest with 2 or more 8,000 foot+ runways, but the 17th busiest US airport based on daily flights in 2009.

**Based on hourly flights, only Chicago O'Hare is busier than MSP.** Reduced separations at these two airports increase runway use rates (operations per hour) *at the expense of reaction time in an alarm condition.* This is most acute on approaches, because the descending airliner over-taking the one ahead of it may not be able to either slow down (too close to stall air speed already) or to immediately climb (engine response is several seconds)

MSP hourly rates near 155 operations/hour persisted after the new runway opened even during periods (2007, 2009) when one and then the other main parallel runways was closed for months for major work. The longest runway at MSP (R4-22) is used as an aircraft parking lot.

Not surprisingly, congestion and complicated ground traffic movement is a frequent hazard. Collisions between aircraft or between aircraft and vehicles occurred at MSP. Runway incursions and near misses have been documented that cannot be found in public files.

These events are often a consequence of high rates, busy controllers and airline systems operations and misunderstood or delayed communications. Matters are worse since the merger of Delta and Northwest. Most airline ground operations personnel at MSP are newly assigned and their on-duty numbers are less than in 2008. A major portion of Delta/Northwest flights are operated by regional contractors, with pilots who may be, and too-often are -- less-well trained and less familiar with MSP.

FAA regulation -- inspections and enforcement of corrective orders -- has been lax.

Media reported over 100 safety-compliance orders were ignored by Northwest. [Northwest also was fined, in July 2010, a not insignificant \$38 million for price-fixing in the air freight business.

This bears mentioning in a safety story because of the corporate attitude exhibited about regulations, inspections, and oversight.]

Now MAC and Met Council have updated a long-term comprehensive plan to further expand the hub. More gates, more aircraft at MSP at the same time; more connections, more connecting passengers; so more operations per hour using the same runways and taxiways.

FAA Research and Development programs addressing safety at airports lag due to budget cuts and re-authorization delays. One of the developments hoped to supplement ground traffic control controlled visually from the Tower; *buildings and parked aircraft obscure sight-lines.*

**Media reported over 1,000 safety-compliance orders were ignored by Northwest. Northwest also was fined, in July 2010, a not insignificant \$38 million for price-fixing in the air freight business.**

This problem remains in practice, and more gates for large airliners as planned along the southwest side of the Lindbergh Terminal will make things worse. The airlines, the airport, or the FAA can possibly station additional observers and add communications but have announced no plans to do so in the next 7 years. But the capital improvements plan currently being reviewed for 2011-2017 is for more gates, supporting bigger banks.

#### SMAAC's Legislative Agenda for 2010:

*Notwithstanding the MSP 2030 LTCP and the Met Council Transportation Policy Plan, Legislature should review all options for airports furthering Minnesota's economic objectives after 2020, and limit MSP flight capacity to 125% of 1996 hourly use.*

*The Legislature should prohibit further hub expansion at MSP for safety, environmental and economic reasons.*

*Metro legislators must at least exercise their right to coordinate airport commissioners appointments or amend the statute so that Commissioners are either elected or selected by the Legislature in a more open way.*

## When Will MSP Passenger Traffic Hit Bottom?

By Dick Saunders

MSP passenger totals declined 2.8% in the first half of 2010 compared with the same period a year earlier, according to MAC's June flight operations report.

Through June 30, the airport has handled 15.72 million travelers versus last year's six-month total of 16.17 million.

MAC had forecast a 2.5% increase in customers this year, the first gain since 2004, on airline expectations of an improving economy. But recent indicators show a slowing of the economy for the next two quarters, putting the MAC growth projection in question. Whether this shortfall can be made up in the second half of 2010 "remains to be seen," a MAC executive told SMAAC, citing economic uncertainties and incomplete fall-winter airline schedules.

In MSP's favor, several airlines announced new or restored service, starting with twice-daily Southwest flights to Phoenix Aug. 15. Sun Country flew once a week to London between mid-June and mid-August. Mesaba added a third daily flight to International Falls. American will re-establish four flights a day from New York (LaGuardia) this fall after a two-year hiatus, operating smaller CRJ700s. Delta will extend daily service from MSP to Paris on a year-round basis. It also will increase London Heathrow departures from five times a week to seven. And Delta will open Mexico City this winter, restoring a route held by long-defunct Braniff in the 1960s.

But, because the domestic market is not expected to grow more than 1-2% this year, "flat" would appear to be "the new normal for 2010," as MAC's planning director said as the year began.

MSP ended 2009 handling 32.4 million passengers, a decline of 5 % from 34.1 million in 2008, and down 14% from the peak in 2005. Flights in 2009 dipped 3.4% to 432,395 from 2008 and 19% from the 2004 peak of 541,093 flights. The ratio of Minnesota passengers (54%) to connecting passengers (46%) stayed about the same as in past years.

Another new factor adding uncertainty to the MSP outlook in coming years arises from Delta's June sale of two regional subsidiaries. Mesaba Airlines, based in Eagan, was sold to Pinnacle Airlines, another Delta subsidiary based in Memphis, for \$62 million. Compass Airlines, an NWA startup whose headquarters had been moved from Chantilly, VA. to the new Delta North facility at MSP, was purchased by Trans State Airlines of St. Louis for \$20 million.

The Compass relocation move was part of a Delta commitment to the Minnesota legislature to replace some of the employees laid off after the Northwest merger.

While both new managements assert no changes in service are planned, skeptics are asking whether staff reductions might not be necessary if second-half regional traffic stays soft.

## Major Airlines Exploit Hub Airport Consumers

By Jim Spensley

According to Julie Johnsson, (Chicago Tribune, July 21, 2010) "United, American and Delta led global carriers in collecting ancillary revenues in 2009. " Led is the right verb. Collecting more revenue for the same service only produces more revenue if lower fares and fees are unavailable.

Only Southwest and a few other holdouts resisted. Good for them!

Johnsson reported that "Airlines worldwide collected \$13.5 billion in 2009, a 43 percent jump from 2008 totals, according to financial filings made by 96 airlines. United Airlines generated the greatest fee income of any carrier in the world: \$1.9 billion in ancillary revenues last year.

"Every major U.S. carrier except Southwest Airlines rolled out luggage fees during 2008 in an effort to boost revenues as business travel sagged following Wall Street's historic meltdown. Although most large airlines are finally profitable in early 2010 for the first time in three years, they aren't inclined to rescind the controversial charges. "

High fares, as well as additional fees, should be controversial. Congressman Oberstar is right to want consumer protection of a kind by making all travel costs visible at the time of initial purchase. But knowing how you are being exploited is not valuable if there is no alternative at hand.

Even more worrisome is the more profit, more revenue, more profit cycle that threatens both safety and efficiency in the air transportation business.

Government should be increasingly vigilant in inspections and aggressive in enforcing regulations now that airlines have cut staff, decreased maintenance and inspection budgets, contracted with regional carriers, and crammed more flights at peak hours into already congested airports.

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## LTCP Conditions

(Continued from page 1.)

Ms. Bowles responded "The last thing want is another 'dual-track' thing that wastes resources and interferes with the many developments being planned around MSP by the cities."

(Ms. Bowles was referring to the \$10-million study in the 90's that culminated in a legislative decision to expand at the cramped existing campus rather than developing a new larger site.)

In spite of Ms. Bowles statement, the condition is:

2) MAC should initiate a capacity study two years in advance of when MSP is expected to have 540,000 annual operations and incorporate the results of this study into the following LTCP update.

The Met Council implied serious concerns with MSP expansion plans, including too few updates, uncertainties about safe and sufficient airport capacity, noise, highway improvements, water pollution, and finance.

"In our opinion, the LTCP draft was too vague, covered too many years, omitted critical information and lacked meaningful public discussion." said Jim Spensley, SMAAC President. "SMAAC, the Met Council staff and their advisory board identified some key issues in the LTCP, but the six conditions mainly kick the can down the road rather than dealing with them."

SMAAC argued in meetings and letters that current MSP annual flight capacity is not indicative that air services are adequate. At a hub airport like MSP passenger capacity is shared between local and connecting passengers.

**"...the six conditions mainly kick the (key issues) down the road rather than dealing with them."**

Hub operations are concentrated at certain hours, making hourly peak rates and FAA air traffic control procedures the key is that local passenger capacity is the basis for determining projected economic needed..

SMAAC asked Met Council and MAC to refine the capacity study condition because:

- The range of hourly operations at MSP that sum to 540,000 annually is 390 per cent ... no basis for planning or review.
- The use of MSP needed for economic growth, new business planning, and population increases depends historically and actually on the hub activity, which often limits local passenger capacity.
- How MSP capacity is used is mostly dictated to the MAC by the airlines, not derived from economic need or growth.
- Annual local passenger boardings are not a measure of need or demand -- the supply of fairly priced

tickets here is determined by national competition or airline collaborations.

The six Conditions:

1. *The LTCP should note that MAC will update the plan every five years and that MAC will budget for this in the appropriate years to ensure that the first update is prepared by 2015.*
2. *MAC should initiate a capacity study two years in advance of when MSP is expected to have 540,000 annual operations and incorporate the results of this study into the following LTCP update.*
3. *MAC should initiate an FAA Part 150 study update (which includes a comprehensive noise analysis and mitigation program), in consultation with the MSP Noise Oversight Committee (NOC), when the forecast level of operations five years into the future exceeds the levels mitigated in the Consent Decree (582,366 annual operations). The results of this study should be incorporated into the first subsequent LTCP Update.*
4. *MAC shall continue to work with all appropriate agencies to implement the Interstate 494/34th Avenue, Trunk Highway 5-Glumack Drive and Trunk Highway 5-Post Road interchange modifications included in the 2030 Concept Plan, including preliminary environmental scoping and analysis.*  
*These highway modifications are not currently included in the region's fiscally-constrained 2030 highway plan.*
5. *The LTCP needs to acknowledge that storm water from MSP detention ponds discharges to the reaches of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers that are identified as water-quality impaired for a number of pollutants and stressors.*
6. *The LTCP should include a general discussion of financial assumptions and funding mechanisms available to implement the proposed development.*

SMAAC also criticized:

Condition 1, because it can be construed to limit or reduce Met Council review of annual capital improvement budgets and projects;

Condition 3, as lip service only;

Condition 5 as requiring no action;

Condition 6 as not questioning financial assumptions such as revenue from local travelers (e.g. parking), revenue sharing for airlines, Federal aid, or increased spending implied by Conditions 3 and 5.

## FAA Reauthorization Passed

The Airline Safety and FAA Extension Act of 2010, sponsored by Rep. Jim Oberstar, D-MN, is now enacted.

"This legislation (means) we can start improving the training of pilots on regional airlines," Oberstar said before the Senate vote. "This is the culmination of the work I started after the Northwest Airlin Crash in Hibbing 16 years ago. It's long overdue."

### **No 3-Hr. Tarmac Delays in U.S. in October This Year**

From Air Transportation World, Dec. 7, 2010, (paraphrased):

The US DOT said there were no tarmac delays longer than 3 hr. in October 2010, down from 11 in 2009. The report noted that this is the first month there were no tarmac delays of more than 3 hr. since October 2008. The 3 hr. tarmac delay rule went into effect in April 2010.

>SMAAC Comment: While we think the big fines have the airlines' attention, there are a lot of ways to lay the problems off on the FAA or the airport(s) and escape the fines.

According to data released by USDOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics, there have been only 12 total tarmac delays of more than 3 hr. reported from May through October this year by the 18 airlines that file on-time performance data with DOT, compared to 546 during the same

five-month period of 2009. The 18 carriers reported that 4.79% of their flights were delayed by

>SMAAC Comment: Would Aviation Week report how many passengers were stuck for 2 hours and 50 minutes? Note that the statistics are not for 3-hour and over delays, but for flights. 15.1 % this year; 13.4% in 5 non-winter months.

See related story on page 6.

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### How Hub Expansion Happened

### **Summary of 1995 MSP Expansion and 1998 FEIS/ROD – Flight and Passenger Capacity**

In 1996, the Minnesota legislature embraced the idea of 620,000 operations per year maximum and 35 million departing passengers per year at MSP, knowing that Minnesotans and Minnesota commerce only needed about 8 million LOCAL PASSENGER departures (or 16 million travelers) in 2020 if economic growth forecasts were accurate. There were three seriously flawed assumptions in the plan:

1. Annual operational capacity needed for 16 million to 17 million local passengers (125% more) was based on 125 gates total, or a peak hour capacity around 90 operations in aircraft carrying 150 to 200 passengers on average.
2. Of the passengers departing MSP, at least 50% were assumed "local," that is, either people connecting at MSP from airports in Minnesota (Duluth, Rochester etc.) or arriving at MSP by ground vehicles, LRT, or private/air taxi. The hub provided more direct flights to US and national destinations and the Federal government subsidized service to smaller cities in Minnesota and around the upper Midwest. Note: In 1995, the reference year, the hubbing factor was measured by interviewing passengers at the gates: 14 of every 24 said they were connecting passengers and did not intend to leave the airport while in Minnesota (only 42% local).
3. Northwest Airlines agreed to provide the State jobs and enterprises offsetting half of the \$2.8 billion dollar expansion cost and to repay a \$275 million loan to be used for developing new businesses in Minnesota and expanding MSP.

Assumption 1. is about 8,500 passengers departing per peak hour, so MAC supposedly sized the planned expansion for less than 3,650 peak hours per year, or less than 10 peak hours per day. In 1995, the hub flights were carried 80 to 90 percent of the total passengers, so 5 hours per day at 120 operations per hour and 13 hours per day at an average of 67 operation per hour. If the two parallels and the new runway were used 14 hours each per day, and R4-22 not at all, MSP could handle 70 million passengers. There is no need for runway use rates over the FAA standard. FAA actually reduces maximum rates per runway at MSP for safety reason including runway lengths.

Assumption 2 has never been true, and Delta/Northwest's reservation and ticket policy is based on system-wide yield models that result in fares at least 30% higher per air mile traveled than in comparable non-hub cities.

Assumption 3 was formalized into covenants and advertised as iron-clad proof that Northwest Airlines and the State intended to continue "world class" service at MSP and by the airline. The agreements however were re-negotiated 3 or 4 times. Now, MAC collects less than 40% of its revenue from Delta/Sky Team leases and landing fees. The hub airline now pays less per passenger boarding than in 1995 -- a MAC bragging point.

Due to its near monopoly, Delta keeps its high fares. MSP expansion was far better for Delta/NWA than for Minnesota.

## MSP Passenger Traffic Report, January-July 2010

The MAC report raises several questions:

Are the new flights by American Eagle, four times a day from New York (LaGuardia) this fall, or the third Mesaba flight to International Falls, "new service" compared with 2004 or 2005 schedules? Do they provide less seats than were offered by Northwest or American before 2008?

On the surface, more service to NY LaGuardia and International Falls seems to be a sign of slightly increased Minnesota economic demand. This needs to be tempered by comparing seats per day in prior years. Passenger traffic for local demand is capped by airline capacity and use by connecting passengers.

Also, service to LaGuardia by American could also still be fewer locally available seats as previously available to New York (including canceled or smaller-aircraft flights to Kennedy, LaGuardia or Newark).

The ratio of originating and destination passengers to connecting passengers as reported by MAC is difficult to compare with service used by Minnesota travelers, visitors to Minnesota attractions or trips to do business in Minnesota.

If in 2009 only 46% of departing passengers connected the same day here that would be a drastic change compared with busier years. It is far more likely that changes in flight operators and the reporting of ticket sales by more agents and operators made many connecting passengers into *two* reported local passengers.

Example: A business man arrives on a Delta flight from Detroit and continues on to Denver on a Southwest Flight. In 1996, a 2-coupon Northwest ticket would have been issued in Detroit for a continuing Northwest flight to Denver. Even travelers connecting at MSP from Detroit and continuing to Denver on Frontier or United would have appeared in the ticket/reservation system as connecting at MSP. The two seats leaving MSP occupied-- coming and going -- were not, and ought not to have been counted as local.

They should not, by extension, be considered local passenger capacity. In 2004, some connecting travel was miscounted as local travel, and in 2009 it is likely to be more unless load factors (occupied seats to total seats) were significantly smaller.

When Delta "right-sized" their fleet for higher load-factors, they reduced unused capacity slightly but made considerably fewer seats available for local purchase.

However, connecting-passenger traffic via MSP remains slow due to the US economy. If there truly were more local than connecting passengers using MSP, it is a sign, as previously reported by SMAAC.

Some local business travel needs were not being met in 2004 or 2005: but in 2008-09, unused seats were purchased by local travelers *because they were discounted compared to fares in 2007*. This can be called **pent-up demand**.

Downsizing many aircraft used for flights at MSP and any recovery in National demand will each be disadvantageous to the local economy because each limits supply and may raise fares.

## Near-Miss May Stir Up an FAA Investigation

Posted September 24, 2010

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.

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 common. In messages to SMAAC, MSP Executive Director Jeff Hamiel noted that simultaneous use of runways is routine (at MSP), even when there is no need and there would be no significant flight delay.

While it appears that at least two FAA clearances (instructions) were inappropriate under current procedures, the separation exceptions already limit reaction times, and a busy communications situation often exists at MSP.  
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## Near-Miss May Stir Up an FAA Investigation

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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 were 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 was 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 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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## NTSB Probes Near-Midair Collision at MSP

Posted October 04, 2010

SMAAC's analysis of the May 2005 ground collision at MSP found that communications among FAA, aircraft, and airlines contributed to that accident. SMAAC objected to airport projects implementing higher rates (operations per hour) because communications, and understanding communications, cannot be rushed.

Reducing the time available to confirm, understand or question controller instructions, or to interpret aircrew situations, is inadvisable and often unsafe.

The National Transportation Safety Board does not do near-miss investigations, but was involved in this case rather than FAA because FAA controller errors are alleged. "Probable cause" investigations work back in time from the accident, and in this case, the facts seem to be that the A320 turn was the probable cause.

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## Ellison Asked to Contact FAA

Posted October 11, 2010

SMAAC asked Fifth District Congressman Keith Ellison to write FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt asking that FAA conduct operations more evenly over the day rather than concentrating aircraft and runway operations during a few peak hours each day, specifically that an operating exception to standard separations of aircraft around MSP be withdrawn.

Separations of aircraft and intervals between operations were halved in 2000 (or thereabout) because of flight demand by NWA at peak hours. The exception was to the usual FAA minimal (standard) separations and granted by the Great Lakes Regional FAA office. In spite of public reservations, MAC endorsed the NWA request. Commerce trumped quietude, safety and the environment.

Over the years, larger hub banks and the practice of clearing aircraft when requested by the Captain increased the pace of all operations at MSP and minimal intervals -- or less when 2 or 3 runways are active -- became routine.

However, the Delta merger introduced more regional operators; their captains and systems operations staff personnel are less proficient and less familiar with MSP and MSP routine. In low visibility conditions, there are different procedures.

Also, today there are fewer operations scheduled per day, and restoring standard intervals would have a minor effect on use of gates use and connecting passengers' waits in an MSP Terminal.

Slightly extending the connecting hours and slightly reducing the hub banks would have another positive effect: less congestion on the airport grounds and less chance of an airline being short of gates during bad weather.

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## Ellison Asked to Contact FAA

{Continued from Page 7}

> Reply Posted October 11, 2010 by a citizen.

"Mr. Ellison has not been seen or heard on noise, high fares, or safety since he was elected. Good luck getting him to take a stand with FAA. "

>>SMAAC Comment. We were gratified by the same-day reply, but Rep. Ellison had agreed earlier to send a letter. The suggestion led to the *Rates and Safety at MSP* Forum.

The respondent went on to write:

"There(must be) less than 20 US Reps, almost all Democrats -- do you think airports get expanded in the rich suburbs? -- with a big hub airport in, or partly in, their Districts. One would think there would be a sub-caucus, sponsoring safety amendments to the FAA re-authorizations.

"Being cynical, I suggest Ellison could raise a little campaign dough by getting interested. Airline lobbies and PACs shoveled it out for Pawlenty and collected. I bet they'd be glad to have some problems dropped at FAA's door.

"This blog convinced me that the Bush "plan" for upgrading air traffic control was eyewash. Confirmation: the Bush FAA Administrator who proposed it is now working for an airline lobby firm."

>SMAAC Comment: We several times in the past suggested such a caucus because we work closely with several other citizen groups.

## MSP Flight Safety Rules

Posted October 21, 2010,

The FAA has rules for aircraft separations depending on, among other things, proximity to an airport with FAA Air Traffic Controllers. Flights from airport to airport over the USA are controlled separately, with larger separations because of high cruise speeds.

The rules have a standard, separation unless a special exception exists. Plus or minus exceptions apply to airports, aircraft type or category, or both. It is complicated but not unfathomable.

According to the FAA MSP Tower Manager, air traffic control procedures do not allow turns toward an active runway. :Landing patterns and take-off dispersions avoid crossing the extended centerline of the adjacent parallel. unless the adjacent runway is closed

MSP operates with some exceptions granted temporarily by the Great Lakes Regional Office.

Air traffic control at MSP is complicated. And the complications are less safe during peak operational hours when separation rules are rapidly applied and quickly communicated to the aircraft. In the case of the 16 September 2010 near-mid-air collision, an unsafe maneuver was at least cleared -- leaving execution to the pilot based on altitude -- or ordered by the Tower.

It was not helpful on that occasion that "Extended runway crossing is a normal operational choice for controllers as they separate departing traffic." as explained by MSP Director Jeffrey Hamiel in a message October 20. It appears from a quick review of FAA standards that turns toward active runways are NOT normally allowed below 20,000 feet or within 30 miles of a commercial airport.

## Delta Airlines Turns a Profit

Posted October 21, 2010

Delta Air Lines announced a \$363 million net profit for the third quarter of 2010, reversing a \$161 million net loss in the same quarter last year.

CEO Richard Anderson said the profits were driven by higher fares and lower costs and " the synergies from the (Northwest Airlines) merger."

Anderson emphasized that lowering debt is "one of our highest financial priorities" and highlighted \$750 million in debt reduction during the September quarter.

>>SMAAC Comment. Repayment of the State's loan to Northwest Airlines remains on the re-negotiated schedule granted to Delta by the MAC after the merger.

Fourth-quarter passenger capacity will be up 5%-7% compared to 4Q 2009 Delta predicted, mostly international flight capacity, up 10%-12% compared to 2009. Delta announced that *domestic capacity during the quarter will be down 10% from combined DL/NWA 2007 fourth-quarter domestic levels.*

>>SMAAC Comment: The realignment of NWA flights that started in 2008 drove passenger capacity at MSP down more than the recession reduced fare revenue nationally. Passenger capacity for flights departing MSP was reduced by more, smaller aircraft (regional operators).

Delta's 3Q2010 revenue surged 18% to \$8.95 billion, outpacing an 8% rise in expenses to \$7.95 billion.