



**Request for City Council Committee Action
From the Department of Community Planning and Economic
Development**

Date: September 25, 2012

To: Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation & Public Works Committee

Subject: **Comments on the MSP 2020 Draft Environmental Assessment/Environmental Assessment Worksheet**

Recommendation:

Approve the City's comments on the MSP 2020 Draft Environmental Assessment/Environmental Assessment Worksheet and direct CPED to submit the comments to the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

Previous Directives: None

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Approved by: Jack Byers, Ph.D., AICP, Planning Manager

Presenters: Paul Mogush, AICP, Principal City Planner 673-2074

Reviews:

Permanent Review Committee (PRC):	Not Applicable
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan:	Not Applicable
Policy Review Group (PRG):	Not Applicable

Financial Impact: Action is within current department budget

Community Impact:

Neighborhood Notification:

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) is holding two open houses and a public hearing during the public comment period for the Environmental Assessment. Councilmembers representing affected wards have advertised these meetings via their regular newsletters.

City Goals:

Livable Communities, Healthy Lives

Comprehensive Plan:

Policy 2.11: Minneapolis recognizes the economic value of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and encourages its healthy competition to reach global markets in an environmentally responsible manner.

Policy 6.12: Minneapolis recognizes the economic value of the Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) International Airport but will advocate for measures to reduce its noise impacts.

Zoning Code: N/A

Background/Supporting Information

In 2010 the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) approved an update to its Long Term Comprehensive Plan, identifying facility improvements needed to meet airport demand through 2030. The plan outlines four phases of potential improvements to be implemented in five-year increments. On August 30, 2012, the MAC released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the environmental effects of the first two phases of these improvements, through 2020. The MAC's intent is to gain the necessary environmental clearance to move forward with projects as they deem them necessary. The draft EA is available on the MAC web site: <http://www.mspairport.com/about-msp/msp-2020-ea.aspx>

The EA process is governed by both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, and is guided by the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) policies and procedures for considering environmental impacts: FAA Order 5050.4B, "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions" and FAA Order 1050.1E, "Environmental Impacts, Policies and Procedures."

For the purposes of environmental review, the MAC considered three alternatives for facility improvements, one in which airlines remain in the terminals where they are presently located, one in which all non-Delta SkyTeam airlines relocate to Terminal 2, and a no-action alternative. The MAC's preferred alternative is Alternative 2 – Airlines Relocate. This alternative most closely reflects the projects anticipated in the first two phases of the Long Term Comprehensive Plan. These projects include expanding both terminals, new and expanded parking ramps, several roadway changes in Bloomington and at the airport, and some minor changes on the airfield.

The EA includes a noise analysis based on a projection of the number of operations (flights) at the airport in 2020 and 2025. The analysis shows little difference among the three alternatives in terms of the noise impact in Minneapolis. However, an anticipated increase in air traffic, regardless of which construction projects take place at the airport, will substantially increase the noise footprint. The City's comments ask the MAC to take a number of steps to reduce this increase in noise, including making more use of departures over the Minnesota River as well as advocating for a statewide aviation strategy that would make better use of other Minnesota airports for commercial flights.

The comment letter also calls into question the utility and precision of the metric the MAC uses to estimate and convey the impact of noise pollution on the community. The current metric, called Day/Night Average Noise Level (DNL), does not adequately reflect the experience of people on the ground. The MAC is required by the FAA to use this metric. The comment letter asks the MAC to take on a leadership role with the surrounding communities and the FAA on identifying and implementing a new methodology and metric for measuring the impact of aviation noise, starting with an independent noise study that uses actual noise measurements rather than modeling.

Using this metric that the FAA requires, the City of Minneapolis along with other airport communities and the Metropolitan Council, have adopted 60 DNL as the local standard for MAC-provided noise mitigation. The EA proposes to continue to provide mitigation out to the 60 DNL line, but in a way that does not guarantee homes experiencing increased noise will receive mitigation. The MAC proposes to provide additional mitigation based on the projected noise

area included in this EA when the number of annual flights surpasses 484,879 or the year 2020, whichever comes first. That means that mitigation will be provided based on a map that is up to eight years old and will not necessarily reflect where the noise is actually taking place at the time. The comment letter requests that the provision of any new noise mitigation be based on an assessment of measured conditions by geography rather than the total number of operations at the airport. The MAC should continue to update noise exposure maps annually and tie this measurement to a clearly-defined mitigation strategy that is approved by the surrounding communities.

As this EA is being rolled out, the FAA, MAC, and the airlines are working to develop new departure and arrival procedures in which planes will follow a more closely-defined route than they do today. These procedures are called Performance-Based Navigation (PBN). This change to flight patterns is not included in the EA. Because these and other changes to the airport are not included in the EA, the comment letter requests that the MAC analyze the environmental effects of all planned projects and aircraft departure and arrival procedures comprehensively in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement.

With approval of the City Council, the attached letter will be submitted to the MAC as the City's comments on the MSP 2020 Draft Environmental Assessment/Environmental Assessment Worksheet, under the mayor's signature, prior to the close of the comment period on October 11.

Recommended Action

Approve the City's comments for the MSP 2020 Draft Environmental Assessment/Environmental Assessment Worksheet and direct CPED to prepare the attached comment letter to the Metropolitan Airports Commission for submission under the Mayor's signature.

Attachment – MSP 2020 EA/EAW Comment Letter