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- Twin Cities major-airport planning



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**Twin Cities**

**Major Airport**

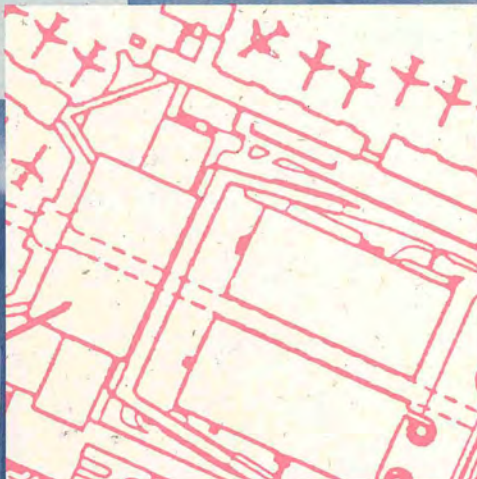
**Planning:**

*A Citizen's Guide*

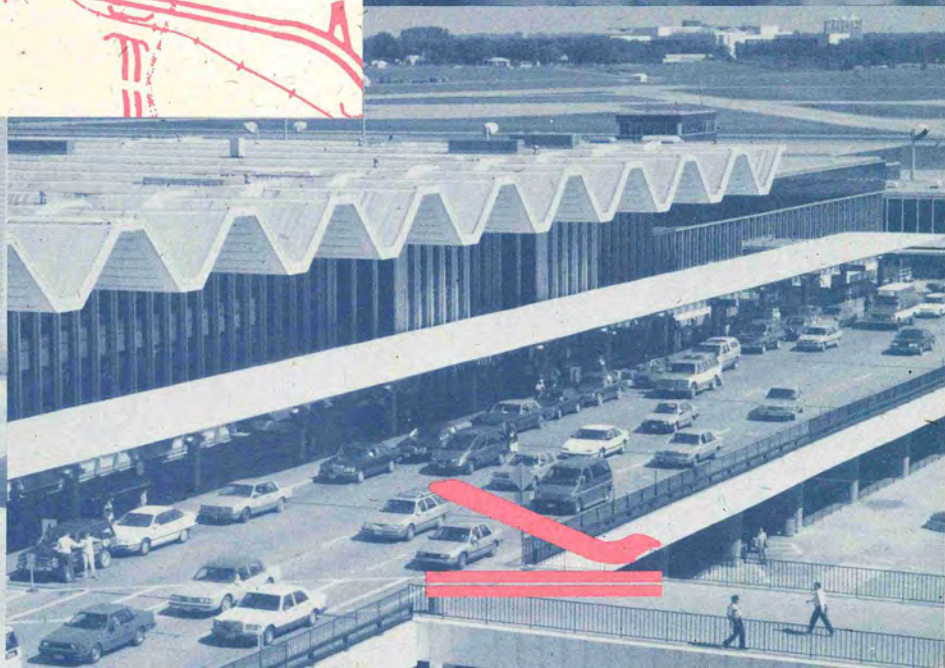
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*A joint publication of  
the Metropolitan Airports  
Commission and the  
Metropolitan Council*



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## **Twin Cities Major-Airport Planning: A Citizen's Guide**

December 1990

A joint publication of the  
Metropolitan Council and the  
Metropolitan Airports Commission

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## Does the Twin Cities Need a New Airport?

It is highly likely that the Twin Cities region will need more airport capacity in the future. The big question is whether major improvements to the existing airport would provide enough capacity or whether we need a new, replacement airport.

We can't answer that question today. It is going to take about six years to gather the data and to conduct the planning necessary to have the answers. It will also take the involvement of the people who live here so tomorrow's decisions reflect the basic values of the community. That's a big order because it's a large "community of interest," and includes the flying public, the airlines, businesses that use the airport, and the affected local governments, airport neighbors and people in Greater Minnesota. By 1996, the region, together with the Minnesota Legislature, will be in a position to make decisions about the region's major airport.

This citizen's guide summarizes the legislatively mandated steps the Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) are taking. It describes the key steps mandated by the 1989 Metropolitan Airport Planning Act, the different roles of the Council and the MAC, and the committees that are involved with the effort.

The guide also answers some of the commonly asked questions about the airport planning.

The guide does not have information about specific planning proposals. Such information is available in other reports published by the dual-track organizations.



## It's a Dual-Track Process

Planning for a major Twin Cities airport is a single, comprehensive effort called the "dual-track" process. One track focuses on possible ways to improve the capacity of the current airport. The MAC is conducting this planning, and is focusing on meeting needs projected to the year 2020.

The other track focuses on designating a search area (a large tract of land within which a site will be selected) for a possible replacement airport for the region. The Metropolitan Council is doing the search-area work. After the search area has been selected, the MAC will select a site within it.

The planning is under way because separate studies conducted by the MAC and the Metropolitan Council recently have shown that it is quite possible that additional capacity is needed at the current airport and that, even with that capacity, the airport may not be adequate in the future.

*One track focuses on the current airport...the other track focuses on a replacement airport.*



The MAC and the Metropolitan Council are also monitoring trends and forecasts annually on such factors as aircraft landings and takeoffs, the economy of the region, growth in passenger and freight traffic, and changes in the airline industry. By monitoring and reporting these factors, the region and the legislature will be able to decide when—and whether—to implement one option or the other.

The dual-track effort is designed to preserve the region's airport options for the future, and to move into a position to make decisions about expanding airport capacity.

The region wants to avoid a future situation in which it should go forward but can't, because land development or other events have removed some options. It could take 20 years or more to site and build a new airport, and at least 10 years to build a new runway at the existing airport. If the region waits until it is sure it needs a new airport or major improvements at the current site, it may be too late to build them in time. That would mean making do with inadequate air transportation for many years. It could also mean economic growth here might be stifled. Minnesota's businesses could be put at a disadvantageous position in the national and world economy.

*The airport generates an estimated \$2 billion in economic activity annually in the state.*

## Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Today

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) lies on pancake-flat land in the heart of the Twin Cities Area. It sits just above the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. The airport is to today's residents what those rivers represented to the region's pioneers—a way to get access to the nation and the world.

The airport is the home base and one of the major hubs for Northwest Airlines, now the fourth-largest airline in the nation. Northwest and other carriers serving the airport offer direct service (that is, passengers don't have to change planes) to 122 national and 12 international destinations. In addition, seven smaller airlines provide service to Upper Midwest cities.

The airport is a busy place, particularly during times most people want to travel. In 1989 there were 364,000 landings and takeoffs. Those flights moved more than 18 million passengers and 242,000 metric tons of cargo.

The airport generates an estimated two billion in economic activity annually in the state. An estimated 80,000 jobs are directly or indirectly tied to the airport.

The airport's Lindbergh Terminal was built in 1961 and has been expanded and modernized several times. It has 67 arrival and departure gates on color-coded concourses that extend from the Lindbergh building and straddle two large parking ramps. From the air, the terminal, gates and parking complex look like a big, immobilized beetle.

The airport comprises nearly 3,100 acres. That's roughly ten times the size of the State Fair grounds. Richfield, a neighboring community,



has 4,600 acres. The airport has two parallel runways laid out in a north-west-to-southeast direction, which is the way the wind blows most of the time, and one crosswind runway in a northeast-to-southwest direction.

The two parallels together can normally handle a maximum of 103 to 112 landings or takeoffs per hour in clear weather, and about 68 to 80 when instruments are required. However, that range in aircraft arrival capacity is generally able to meet today's peak hour demand. Today's aircraft delays caused by airport congestion average about two minutes during clear weather. However, delays are longer when the airport is on instrument flying conditions.

The airport's location makes it very convenient and accessible to air travelers. But that same location, and the relatively small amount of buffer land between runways and neighboring communities, especially on the north and west sides, creates noise and potential safety problems in some communities. Aircraft noise has increased as the airport has become busier.

The airport got busier during the last decade because the airlines are now a deregulated industry and Northwest (and Republic before the merger) uses the airport as its main hub. Northwest collects passengers from throughout the Upper Midwest and brings them here to connect with national and international flights. The airline also uses the airport as a national hub. Traffic is also growing because people want to fly more.

The number of passengers using the airport every year grew from 8.7 million in 1980 to 14 million in 1985. It continued to grow to an estimated 19 million in 1990. Annual aircraft operations have grown from 282,000 in 1980 to an estimated 373,000 in 1990.



*The airport got busier during the last decade because the airlines are now a deregulated industry and Northwest uses the airport as its main hub.*

Annual aircraft operations have stabilized somewhat since 1985 because the airlines are filling their flights with more people. In addition, the merger of Republic and Northwest airlines resulted in route restructuring that has reduced the number of aircraft operations for the short term.

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## Need for Major Improvements in Capacity Is Highly Likely

It is very likely that the region is going to need additional commercial aircraft capacity in the long term. Studies the Metropolitan Council conducted in 1987 and 1988 concluded that the current airport may not be adequate to meet the region's and the state's needs beyond the year 2008.

A MAC study in 1990 concluded the airport will need more runway capacity within 20 years. Without improvements, flight delays could average about 49 minutes under instrument flying conditions during bad weather. The airport simply wouldn't work under that kind of delay. The airlines would no doubt



cancel or reroute some flights. They might also fly at less congested hours to avoid such a long delay.

The result would be reduced access to the nation and the world, or the need to travel during less convenient times. The region's economy might also be dampened.

As a result, the airport will continue to need improvements to handle growth. More interim terminal, gate, parking and other airport facilities will be needed during the next decade. Additional major developments, such as a fourth or a fifth runway, plus some major expansions of terminal, gate, and parking facilities, could make the airport viable through the year 2020, MAC studies show. These facilities would, of course, have significant impacts on surrounding communities.

Preparing the airport to handle capacity is part of the picture. In addition, the region needs to provide an airport that meets the long-term needs of the region's economy. Getting the public infrastructure in place--the airports, roads and sewers--to support economic activity, or to promote it, requires a long lead time.

Should these major improvements be made at the existing airport or should a new airport be built?

The airport planning track being carried out by the MAC focuses on MSP's future need for additional capacity. It will identify improvements that might be for the short term only, or possibly for the long term under a view that the current airport would be the region's major airport for the foreseeable future.

The other track focuses on finding a general location, or search area, for a new airport, in the event the new airport option is selected. The Metropolitan Council is carrying out this task. Once a search area--a sizable tract of land--has been identified, the

*...the region needs to provide an airport that meets the long-term needs of the region's economy.*

MAC will do detailed site planning and determine the precise location within the search area where the airport would be located. The MAC will then conduct an environmental evaluation and prepare a detailed plan for the new facility.

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## Timetable

The MAC expects to narrow the new runway alternatives and new terminal concepts for the current airport to two by the end of 1990. Following legislative approval of a time extension, the MAC wants to encourage community discussion of the alternatives and to complete its comprehensive planning for the airport by the end of 1991.

The Metropolitan Council expects to select a search area by the end of 1991, then the MAC will pick a site and prepare a comprehensive plan for the new airport's development. That work is to be finished by the end of 1995.

In 1996 the two agencies are to report their recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature.

The dual-track planning encompasses some of the preliminary steps that would need to be done should either option be selected. At that time, the region could move more quickly to implement the selected option than if it had to start from scratch--with no plan.



## Dual-Track Timetable

	Metropolitan Airports Commission	Task Force	Metropolitan Council	
<b>December 1990</b>		<b>1990</b>		
New Airport Search Area Advisory Task Force identifies several candidate search areas		<b>1</b>		
		<b>1991</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>January 1991</b> Metropolitan Council designates several candidate search areas for further study. Land use controls take effect
<b>June 1991</b>		<b>3</b>		
Task force proposes one candidate search area				
<b>December 1991</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>December 1991</b> Metropolitan Council selects search area
Metropolitan Airports Commission acts on new comprehensive plan for MSP	<b>6</b>	<b>1992</b>		
				<b>January 1992</b> Metropolitan Airports Commission initiates comprehensive planning for new airport in search area
		<b>1993</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>January 1993</b> Metropolitan Council completes reuse plan for MSP
		<b>1994</b>		
		<b>1995</b>		
<b>January 1996</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>9</b>	
Metropolitan Airports Commission picks site, completes comprehensive plan for new airport	<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>	
	<b>Early 1996</b> Region, legislature in position to make a decision			<b>Early 1996</b> Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Airports Commission makes recommendations to the legislature



## Who Is Doing the Planning?

The six organizations described below have been actively carrying out the steps called for in the dual-track approach. Their activities will become more visible as decision time nears on the plans for expanding capacity at the current airport and designation of one search area for a possible new airport.

### Minnesota Legislature

The 1989 legislature established the dual-track process. It will decide about major improvements at the current airport or whether to build a new replacement airport, based on recommendations to be developed by the MAC, the Metropolitan Council and others.

The legislature will play an oversight role during the planning process. The Metropolitan Council and the MAC must produce annual progress reports to the legislature, and members of the legislature sit on the Minnesota Advisory Council on Metropolitan Airport Planning, which advises the full legislature.

The legislature said it wants both tracks to move forward simultaneously, so there is a balance of activity and data gathering supporting each approach. That way, neither option gains a real or perceived advantage—some favorable status—over the other option. The goal here is to keep both options viable during the planning process.

During the 1990 session, the legislature passed a law to protect the search areas from conflicting development.

## Minnesota Advisory Council on Metropolitan Airport Planning

The 23-member organization functions as a statewide forum for education and discussion of the dual-track planning process. It reviews and comments on Metropolitan Council and MAC reports, and advises the legislature. It holds public meetings and gathers research information. It is made up of legislators, state agency heads, Metropolitan Council and MAC members, airline representatives and citizens.

The advisory council has been monitoring progress and reviewing whether changes should be made in the dual-track legislation.

### Metropolitan Council

The 17-member public body coordinates the planning and development of the seven-county Twin Cities Area. The Council develops an overall guided-growth plan for the region called the *Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework* for the area and an *Aviation Development Guide* that meshes with its overall approach to the region's development. The Council also has some airport-related review responsibilities. The Council reviews the comprehensive plan for the region's major airport and any sizable capital improvement projects proposed by the MAC.

The Council has developed guidelines under which it will review proposed land use changes in candidate search areas and established the environmental review process it will follow during the search area planning.





## Metropolitan Airports Commission

The commission was created by the legislature to promote aviation in the region and the state, and to minimize adverse environmental impact in surrounding communities. It owns and operates seven public airports in the Metropolitan Area, including Minneapolis-St. Paul International and six general aviation "reliever" airports. The MAC has 14 commissioners, plus a chair. It is a public corporation and an independent agency that reports to the legislature.

The MAC has narrowed the possible runway and terminal options for the current airport and is continuing to assess them.

## New Major Airport Search Area Advisory Task Force

The 37-member group advises the Metropolitan Council in locating a new airport search area. It also advises on cost, economic impact and environmental impact questions. The task force includes representatives of Minnesota's business and economic interests, labor, the airlines, public affairs, the environment and local government.

The task force has set the criteria it is using to select candidate search areas, and has used the criteria to identify search area locations.

## Contingency Planning Group

This group keeps tabs on any unforeseen changes in such things as technology, travel habits, or the economy that might require adjustments to the dual-track strategy. The group uses the information to make an annual assessment of the need to proceed with any major improvements at the current airport or to acquire or develop a new major airport. The 15-member group is made up of Metropolitan Council and MAC members, local officials and business representatives.

The group completed its first assessment and is now looking at data that will be part of its second annual report.



## Commonly Asked Questions

This section answers some of the questions most frequently asked of the Metropolitan Council and the MAC about the dual-track process.

### **What started all this planning?**

The nation's airlines were deregulated in 1979, and that led to increased competition among airlines. The public's flying appetite has continued to soar. Hubbing at the airport added more traffic. Noise increased. In 1987, the Citizens League urged planning to acquire a new airport site in the event it would be needed in the future. Following a request from Minneapolis City Council members and legislators, the Council conducted a lengthy study of the adequacy of the airport. The dual-track process, mandated by the 1989 legislature, grew out of this milieu.

### **What's wrong with the current airport?**

There are two answers to this question. The first is that the airport could serve the state well into the future, with some interim improvements to assure the airport is safe and modern, and can accommodate the needs of the traveling public. The second is that the airport has a number of limitations. Its runways intersect each other, and are not long enough for some international flights. It wasn't designed for hubbing, and its international terminal is separated from the main terminal. Noise is a problem in many adjacent neighborhoods, because many of them were built in pre-jet days. Some residential neighborhoods are also out of compliance with land use safety standards that were adopted after the neighborhoods had developed.

### **Do we need a new airport?**

No one knows the answer right now. The dual-track process is intended to provide information about alternatives and trends in order to answer the question. It could be "yes" if aviation grows considerably, if a new airport is needed to support an expanding economy, if for some reason the current airport can't develop enough capacity and if it is cost-effective to build a new one. The answer could be "no" if none of the above happen or it turns out to be impossible to site or pay for a new airport.

### **What happens if we do not make major improvements at MSP or build a new airport?**

Doing nothing could, of course, turn out to be the right decision. Based on current trends, however, it is more likely that improvements will be needed. Without them, there could be more delays—or severe congestion—at the airport. The region and the state could suffer economically as a result, or lose opportunities in the national and international marketplace.



**How will the choices be made? Who decides?**

The major airport is a public facility. Decisions about airport service here will be shaped by the groups mentioned above. The Minnesota Legislature will make the final decisions. The Metropolitan Council and the MAC will serve as forums where information can be aired. They intend to follow an open, public process so interested parties can work together to shape a consensus on what should be done. The Council's New Airport Search Area Task Force has representatives of many of the organizations most directly affected by the airport. The task force is a good way to involve them directly.

**How much would a new airport or MSP improvements cost?**

Either option will be very expensive. The costs for major development at either the current airport or a new one could be in the \$2 billion range, or more.

**What are other metropolitan areas doing?**

Denver is building a new airport, in part to stimulate economic growth in Colorado. Seattle and Chicago are looking at the possibility of new airports. Detroit and St. Louis are planning major improvements at their existing airports. Many other airports are looking at how they could expand airport capacity. A recent National Research Council study for the Federal Aviation Administration projected that the number of airline passengers might triple nationally by the year 2040.

**Where would a new airport be located?**

No site has been selected yet. The Metropolitan Council has identified several large tracts of land, called candidate search areas, for further evaluation, and will designate one of them by the end of 1991. Then the MAC will pick a site within the search area, and prepare a plan for the airport's development by the end of 1995.

**How will the search area and final site be "saved" for possible airport use?**

If the search area--or the final site--is in the seven metropolitan counties (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott or Washington), the land uses on the site will be temporarily controlled by the local governments and the Metropolitan Council under a state law. The law is designed to discourage land use changes that would be incompatible with possible airport development. For search areas or sites beyond the seven metropolitan counties, some arrangement, or possibly legislation, will need to be worked out between the Metropolitan Council and the affected communities. After all the planning has been completed, the legislature could choose to have the site put in a "land bank," or to put land use controls into effect that would have the same effect.



**What information will be necessary to exercise one of the options?**

A purpose of the dual-track approach is to develop comparable information on how the current airport could be expanded for more capacity and where a new airport would be located and how it would be designed. Costs, environmental impact and political acceptability will be important factors in the decision.

**How would a new airport affect the Metropolitan Area's development pattern?**

A new airport would have an economic impact on the entire region, regardless of its location. On a more local level, there would be more direct economic and environmental impact. Local land use impact will be determined by local zoning decisions. The new airport could be some distance from the densely populated part of the region. The airport could also be accompanied by associated development that could, over time, connect to existing urban development. The choice will be made in the future.

**Why not have two major airports?**

Two airports means some passengers would need to travel across the region from one airport to another to make connecting flights. It also means airlines would have to maintain duplicate facilities at both airports, and that public facilities--control towers, instrument landing equipment, etc.--would have to be provided at two airports.

**How long will it take to carry out the dual track?**

The planning will be completed by the end of 1995. In 1996, the Metropolitan Council and the MAC will make recommendations to the legislature.



## Appendix

### Metropolitan Council Members

Chair	Steve Keefe
District 1	Liz Anderson
District 2	Mike McLaughlin
District 3	James W. (Jim) Senden
District 4	John Pacheco, Jr.
District 5	David F. Fisher
District 6	Alfred Babington-Johnson
District 7	Mary Hauser
District 8	Donald E. Stein
District 9	Ken Kunzman
District 10	John Evans
District 11	Dottie Rietow
District 12	Gertrude Ulrich
District 13	Dirk deVries
District 14	Marcy J. Waritz
District 15	Margaret Schreiner
District 16	Patrick J. (Pat) Scully

### Metropolitan Airports Commission Members

Thomas Holloran, chair  
 M. G. Brataas  
 Clinton Dahl  
 Jan del Calzo  
 Alton J. Gasper  
 Sam Grais  
 Ron Jerich  
 Thomas C. Kayser  
 Virginia Lanegran  
 Tim Lovaasen  
 Robert McNulty  
 Howard Mueller  
 Faye Petron  
 Thomas A. Vecchi  
 Wilfred Viitala

### New Airport Search Area Advisory Task Force Members

Dick Beens, cochair  
 Josephine Nunn, cochair  
 Liz Anderson  
 Beverly Boyd  
 Larry Buegler  
 Wayne Burggraaff  
 Steve Cramer  
 Jan Del Calzo  
 Marilyn Deneen  
 James Dommel  
 Ted Furber  
 Kathleen Gaylord  
 Benjamin Griggs  
 Edward Gutzmann  
 William Harper, Sr.  
 Beverly Hauschild  
 James Hearon III  
 Phyllis Hiller  
 Gene Hollenstein  
 James Jensen  
 Raymond R. Krause  
 Thomas C. Kayser  
 John Labosky  
 David Lawrence  
 Kay Louis  
 Thomas Morin  
 E. Craig Morris  
 Roberta Opheim  
 William Peterson  
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 J. Michael Podawiltz  
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