

April 2, 2009

Mr. Scott Neal, City Manager  
City of Eden Prairie  
8080 Mitchell Road  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Dear Mr. Neal:

Thank you for sharing the city's position on the airport classification system. While I appreciate your concerns, I want to assure you that I am very much aware of sensitivities having to do runway length at metro-area reliever airports, and there is no action pending before the Metropolitan Council that would impact airport runway length. In fact, it is the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) that determines specific runway lengths, and as you know, state statute sets a limit.

I believe your concerns are the result of some very preliminary work on reliever airport issues by a consultant, and a draft memo the consultant presented to the Aviation Task Force in February for discussion purposes. Revisions based on that discussion are already underway.

That said, here is some additional history and background.

The Metropolitan Council, in January, adopted an update to the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The plan includes a chapter on the aviation system, which has been largely unchanged since 1996. The chapter on aviation can be viewed at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2008/Ch10Aviation.pdf>.

Before we launch the next update of the chapter on aviation, the Council is taking advantage of an infrequent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant, and hired a consultant to conduct a technical examination of all aspects of the regional airport system, something that is long overdue. A technical task force was formed to advise us on the study and Eden Prairie staff member, Scott Kipp, is a task force member.

To date, the consultant has produced a few technical memorandums for discussion with the task force. None of these technical memos has been developed into any kind of report or recommendation to the Transportation Advisory Board, which would have to discuss, review and recommend any conclusions of the Aviation Task Force to the full Council. In other words, any Council action on these airport issues is still some time off.

It was one of those memos, however, that raised the issue of airport classifications.

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The FAA, state and region categorize airports in different ways. (See TPP Table 10-22 on aviation.) The Metropolitan Council has used the same classifications since the 1970s, which are Major (MSP International), Intermediate (St. Paul Downtown) and Minor (all others, except small special purpose airports, like heliports and seaplane bases).

In an attempt to make the regional classification system more like the state and federal systems, and to be consistent with the recommendations of a MAC Reliever Airport Task Force report, the consultant proposed splitting the Minor airports into two categories, Minor I and Minor II. Anoka and Flying Cloud were proposed to be included in the Minor II category based on functionality, since they serve more business traffic than the other reliever airports, which primarily serve general or recreational aviation.

The wording of the consultant memo was unfortunate, however, proposing category distinctions based on runway length, rather than on the functional distinction between a business airport and a general aviation airport. I assure you this is being addressed in a revised memo.

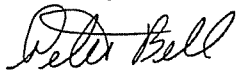
Finally, I would point out that runway lengths for any given airport are not determined by the Metropolitan Council. Rather they are determined when MAC prepares Long Term Comprehensive Plans (LTCP) for individual airports.

MAC, as the owner and operator of the reliever airports, is updating the LTCPs for all six of their reliever airports. The long-term plans must be consistent with the Metropolitan Council aviation system plan for the region, which currently has only a single Minor airport category.

MAC is in the process of updating the LTCP for Flying Cloud and will be reconstructing the airport runway to 5,000 feet this summer. We are not aware of any MAC proposal to include any future runway extensions in the Flying Cloud LTCP.

Thank you for your letter. I hope this is helpful in allaying your concerns. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact Connie Kozlak, Manager of Transportation Planning, at 651-602-1720 or at [Connie.Kozlak@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Connie.Kozlak@metc.state.mn.us).

Sincerely,



Peter Bell  
Chair

C: Metropolitan Council Member Bob McFarlin, District 3 -