

# Who makes the decisions?

Numerous organizations have a role to play in the safe, efficient operation of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP). Similar to the federal highway system, MSP's public transportation infrastructure is regulated by the federal government.

## Role of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Transportation, is responsible for the safe, efficient movement of aircraft through the National Airspace System. The FAA has broad legislative authority to create and enforce federal regulations for airports, airlines and pilots.

In addition to regulating aviation, the FAA also operates the following air traffic control facilities around MSP:

- **The MSP Air Traffic Control Tower (“MSP Tower”)** where controllers monitor and direct all aircraft taxiing, taking off and landing at MSP. Tower controllers are responsible for the airspace up to 3,000 feet above the airport and a radius of five miles around the airport.
- **The MSP Terminal Radar Approach Control (“MSP TRACON”)** where controllers maintain safe spacing between aircraft beyond the MSP Tower control up to 17,000 feet above the airport and out to a 40 nautical mile radius.
- **Minneapolis Air Route Traffic Control Center (“Minneapolis Center”)** where controllers manage aircraft at cruising altitudes between the MSP TRACON in the Midwest region to other regional centers. Minneapolis Center controls the airspace above 17,000 up to 60,000 feet, excluding areas under control by other facilities.

The top priority for the FAA air traffic control is the safe and efficient movement of aircraft. Controllers adhere to a set of separation standards that define the minimum distance allowed between aircraft.

Decisions about which runways aircraft use at MSP are made by FAA officials working in the MSP Tower and MSP TRACON. Airport authorities like the Metropolitan Airports Commission have no authority to dictate where or how airplanes fly.



## Federal Regulations on Flight Restrictions/Curfews

People often ask if the airport can enforce a nighttime curfew or if higher landing fees can be charged to louder aircraft or those that operate at night.

A congressional act passed in 1990, called the Airport Noise and Capacity Act (ANCA), establishes a process for airports to propose any noise or operational access restriction at an airport, such as a nighttime curfew. Airports must conduct a comprehensive technical and legal analysis, called a Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 161 Study<sup>1</sup>. FAR Part 161 broadly defines “noise or access restriction” to include any restriction – including airport lease provisions, like differential landing fees – that affects the operation of aircraft for the purposes of noise reduction.

The final authority to approve or deny the findings of a Part 161 study rests with the FAA. To date, the FAA has not approved any access restriction requests by an airport. A “grandfather” clause in the 1990 ANCA provided that airports that had access restrictions in place prior to 1990 could legally continue to enforce those restrictions without conducting a Part 161 study.

MSP had no restrictions prior to 1990 and therefore is not among the nation's few “grandfathered” airports, which means there is no nighttime curfew or other access restrictions at MSP.

<sup>1</sup> FAR Part 161 – Notice and Approval of Airport Noise and Access Restrictions



## Role of Airlines and Air Cargo Companies

Airlines transport people and products domestically and internationally. They also schedule flights and maintain fleets. Many of the decisions made by airlines are based on passenger demand, including:

- Which destinations will be served;
- Which type of aircraft will operate at an airport;
- What time of day a flight will occur; and
- How frequently a flight will occur

Air cargo companies transport products and packages domestically and internationally. As part of their business model, some air cargo companies operate at night to provide their customers with overnight delivery services.

## Role of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC)

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) owns and maintains MSP and six general aviation airports in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. It is a largely self-funded government entity that generates revenues from rents and fees paid by those who use its airports.

The MAC provides and maintains MSP airport facilities for airlines and air cargo companies to conduct air commerce activities. Services provided by the MAC include developing and maintaining airport roadways, runways, taxiways, ramps, buildings, airport terminal and parking facilities.

Additionally, the MAC manages the Residential Noise Mitigation Program using noise metrics and eligibility guidelines approved by the FAA. The MAC also analyzes flight and noise trends and collects aircraft noise complaints.

The MAC can be viewed as a landlord of the airport, with airlines, air cargo companies, airport restaurants and stores, and car rental companies as tenants to the MAC. Counter to what some may think, **the MAC does not:**

- Screen passengers at security checkpoints (this is the role of the Transportation Security Administration, or TSA);
- Decide where aircraft fly or which runways they use (this is the role of the FAA);
- Regulate air traffic operations at the airport (this is the role of the FAA);
- Schedule air traffic in and out of the airport (this is the role of the aircraft operators, such as airlines and air cargo companies).
- Control entry into the United States by international passengers (this is the role of the federal Customs and Border Protection agency).



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LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MAC'S NOISE ABATEMENT PROGRAMS.  
Visit [macnoise.com](http://macnoise.com) or call 612-726-9411.