

2050 Regional Aviation System Plan

Info Item: Full Update and Re-adoption Overview
Transportation Advisory Board



6/18/2025

2050 Regional Aviation System Plan

Agenda

1. Met Council Role in Regional Aviation
2. Connecting to the Regional Development Guide
3. Aviation Industry Trends and Key Takeaways
4. Regional Aviation System Plan Content and Updates
5. Next Steps

Met Council Role in Regional Aviation



Minnesota Statute 473.165, 473.611 & 473.621

- Aviation not federally mandated system, state statute tasks the Council to plan for the regional aviation system
- Council must prepare Regional Aviation System Plan (within TPP)
 - State requirement – no federal requirement
- Requires regional airports to produce and update Long Term Comprehensive Plans
 - Met Council must review and determine if airport comprehensive plans conform to regional systems and are consistent with regional policy
- Review MAC's Capital Improvement Program and review and approve major capital projects that have a significant effect on the orderly and economic development of the region
- Met Council **does not** provide or allocate direct funding for aviation or operate regional aviation facilities

Connecting to the Regional Development Guide



Aligning Regional Policies

Key Element of Aviation System Plan – Reviewing and Updating Regional Policies to Align with 2050 Vision

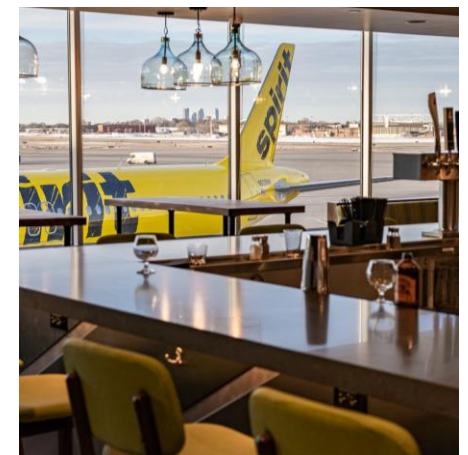
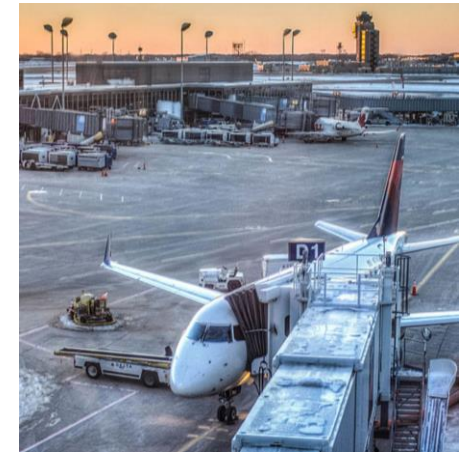
Established small policy review teams made up of local communities and aviation stakeholders

- Held three meetings with both teams:
 1. Review existing policies
 2. Draft/review updated policies
 3. Draft/review supporting actions

In addition, presented to regional industry groups and communities and solicited feedback when requested.

Teams consisted of representatives from:

- Local communities adjacent to regional airports
- MAC
- MnDOT Aeronautics
- FAA
- Other airport operators
- Industry stakeholders
- Met Council staff



Draft Regional Aviation System Policies

Draft 2050 Policy Language

Goal Area: Our Region is Equitable and Inclusive

Policy 1: Conduct public engagement activities in a way which promotes public participation and awareness of aviation issues in the region and promotes opportunities in the regional aviation industry.

Goal Area: Our Region is Healthy and Safe

Policy 2: Maintain and improve, as feasible, airport safety standards that meet FAA and MnDOT standards by addressing safety requirements and land use compatibility with local ordinances, policies and planning.

Policy 3: Conduct planning, development, and operation of regional airports to minimize impacts to adjacent communities. Local land use compatibility policies and other mitigation efforts should be reviewed and updated as warranted to reflect the latest guidance to mitigate noise and other impacts to residents from aviation activities.

Policy 4: Work to reduce emissions from aviation activities that negatively impact air quality for adjacent communities. (new policy)

Draft Regional Aviation System Policies

Draft 2050 Policy Language

Goal Area: Our Region is Dynamic and Resilient

Policy 5: Maintain and improve connections between the region's aviation facilities and the surface transportation system while taking into account local context. Plan for multimodal options to be available for regional airports as necessary and provided according to each airports role in the system.

Policy 6: Coordinate planning and investments that promote aviation access to the state, nation and world from the Twin Cities metro. Ensure regional airports continue to support local economies and businesses.

Policy 7: Regularly review and update regional aviation system information to maintain consistency with state and federal planning. **(new policy)**

Policy 8: Consider and plan for land use implications from aviation facilities which are not located within a regional airport or aviation activity which does not originate from a regional airport. This includes existing facilities like helipads and private air facilities in addition to Unmanned Aerial Systems, Advanced Air Mobility and any other emerging aviation technologies. **(new policy)**

Draft Regional Aviation System Policies

Draft 2050 Policy Language

Goal Area: We Protect and Restore Natural Systems

Policy 9: Implement policies, programs and plans which protects and mitigates impacts on the region's natural resources from the ongoing operation of the region's aviation system.

Goal Area: Not specific to regional goal

Policy 10: Prepare long-term comprehensive plans for MAC owned airports or expanded aviation elements of local comprehensive plans for each airport following FAA requirements and guidance in the Aviation System plan based on an airport's classification.

*Full list of corresponding actions found in the Aviation Supporting Information document

Emerging Aviation Issues and Opportunities for the Region



Emerging Aviation Issues and Opportunities



Aviation Industry Trends and Analysis

Emerging trends in the industry were analyzed to monitor for regional planning considerations – incorporated into plan and informing regional policy

- Aviation Fuels and Alternative Power Sources
- Advanced Air Mobility
- Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)
 - Including new maps where drone use is restricted
- Airport Classifications
- Aircraft Noise
- FAA, MnDOT and Industry Changes

Full can be found papers here: [2050 Aviation Plan Update - Metropolitan Council](#)

Regional Aviation System Plan Content

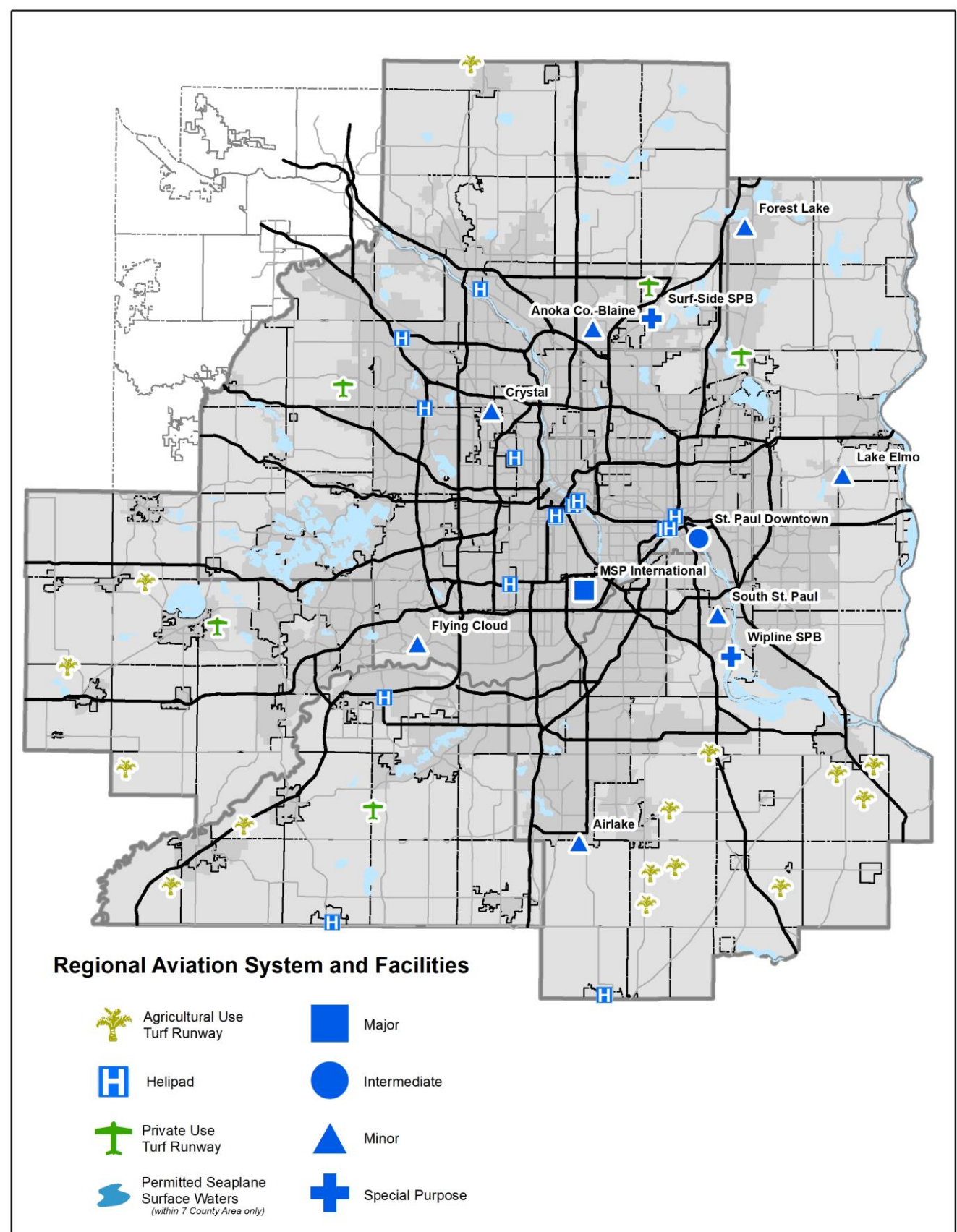


Aviation System Plan Content⁽¹⁾

Regional Airport System - Mature system with limited changes

Aviation system in the region is built out and major changes are not expected

- Nine regional public use airports
 - MSP International Airport
 - Eight relievers to MSP
 - Two seaplane bases
 - All facilities projected to be able to meet forecast demand
- Additional aviation facilities (not regional system) identified in the region
 - Helipads
 - Private turf runways
 - Agricultural use runways
 - Certain lakes and rivers
 - Special Purpose = seaplane base



Aviation System Plan

Content₍₂₎

Regional System – existing airport classifications

The aviation system has three distinct classification types

- FAA: National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS)
- State: State Aviation System Plan
- Regional: Regional Aviation System Plan

Airport (code)	Federal (NPIAS)	State (MNSASP)	Regional
Minneapolis-Saint Paul International (MSP)	Commercial Service - Primary	Key Commercial Service	Major
St Paul Downtown (STP)	National - Reliever	Key General Aviation	Intermediate
Flying Cloud (FCM)	National - Reliever	Key General Aviation	Minor
Anoka-Blaine (ANE)	National - Reliever	Key General Aviation	Minor
Airlake (LVN)	Regional - Reliever	Intermediate - Large	Minor
South St. Paul (SGS)	Regional - Reliever	Intermediate - Large	Minor
Crystal (MIC)	Regional - Reliever	Intermediate - Small	Minor
Lake Elmo (21D)	Regional - Reliever	Intermediate - Small	Minor
Forest Lake (25D)	N/A	Intermediate - Small	Minor



Aviation System Plan Content⁽³⁾



Reviewing and Maintaining the Classification System for the Region

Establishing, reviewing and updating regional airport classifications is one of the roles that fall under the purview of the Met Council

Existing classification system established in 1977

Has seen limited and minor updates from previous regional plan updates

- Last review of the system was done for 2030 TPP in 2008
- Recommendations were not adopted

State law dictates that Minor Airports must have runways at a maximum of 5,000 feet

- No other metrics required by state law nor restrictions on subclassifications

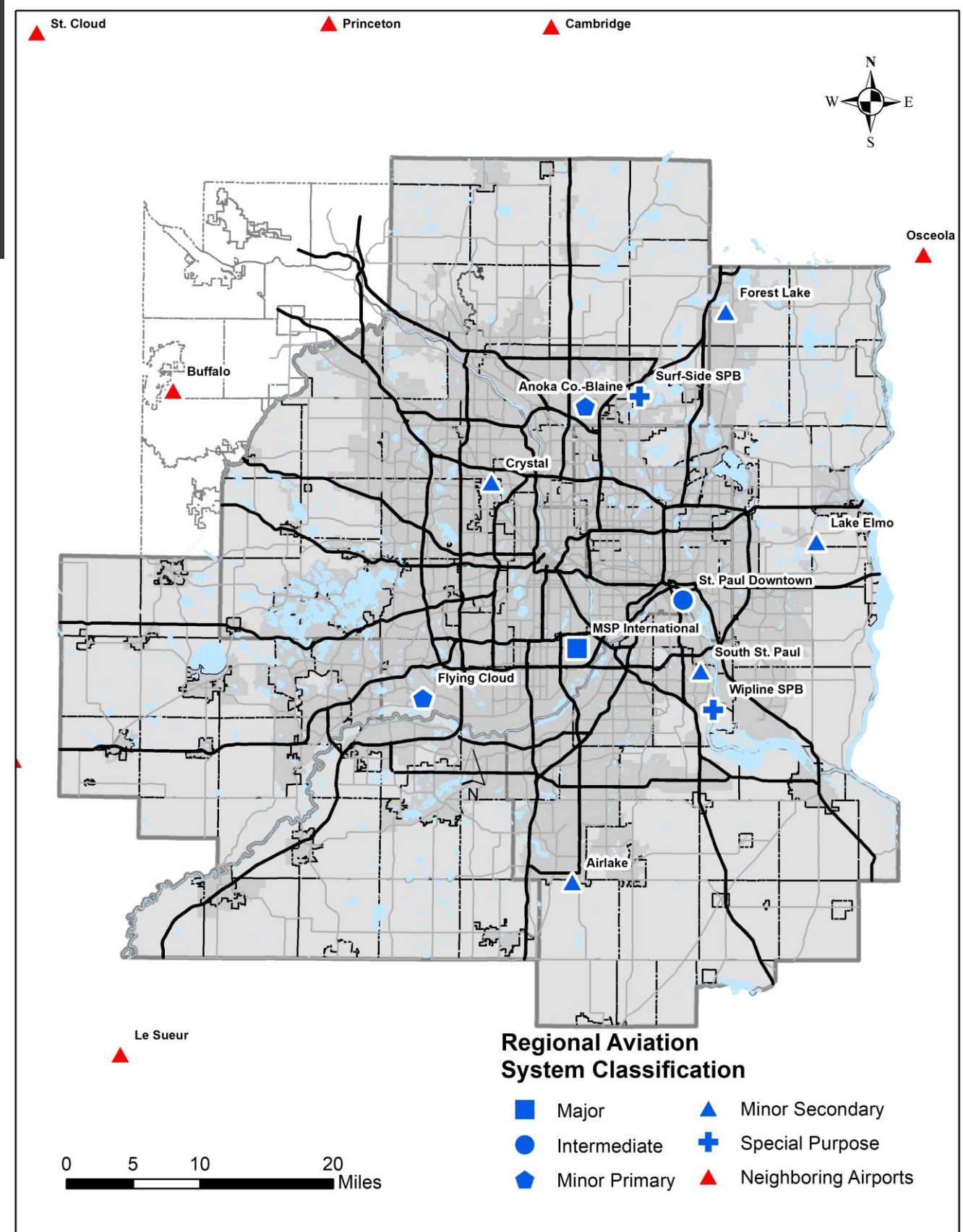
MnDOT Aeronautics overhauled state classifications with 2022 State Aviation System Plan (SASP)

- Regional system now more out of step with state and federal classifications

Aviation System Plan Content(4)

Proposed Update to Regional Airport Classifications

- Proposed to update classification criteria
 - Better define and communicate roles of reliever airports in region
 - Align with state and federal classifications
- Split Minor Airport Classification
 - Minor Primary: Primary relievers to MSP including most regional business jet activity, higher overall activity and more substantial facility needs.
 - Flying Cloud
 - Anoka-Blaine
 - Minor Secondary: Secondary relievers to MSP primarily smaller piston aircraft for training and recreation purposes with reduced facility needs.
- New classification data includes detailed report cards on each airport.



Aviation System Plan Content(5)

Regional System – Flight Activity Rebounding

MSP is nearing passenger levels of 2019, operations still down

- Operations at MSP will continue to trail enplanements as aircraft operators fly less operations with larger planes
- Passenger growth expected to outpace operations growth
- No capacity issues expected for aircraft operations at MSP

General aviation operations continue to grow after years of declines

- General aviation traffic at relievers hit lowest point in 2020 from a peak in 1998
- GA activity is forecasted to continue modest growth through 2050 but not meet previous peaks – no capacity issues anticipated

Forecasts have been updated where possible in update

Activity	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total GA Operations	274,039	254,017	336,139	390,459	425,981
Total MSP Operations	403,665	242,937	299,363	306,385	320,803
Total MSP Enplanements	19,783,380	7,418,648	12,581,412	15,614,084	17,375,590
Total MSP Cargo (metric tons)	228,964	203,697	234,747	237,430	203,643

MSP Forecast Enplanements	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2050
Original (2040 LTCP)	20,000,000	22,500,000	24,400,000	26,300,000	28,100,000	32,300,000
Revised	7,400,000	21,600,000	24,100,000	26,100,000	28,100,000	32,300,000
Revised (Aggressive Recovery)	7,400,000	22,300,000	24,100,000	26,100,000	28,100,000	32,300,000

MSP Forecast Operations	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2050
Original	411,300	433,000	462,400	490,600	517,200	566,417
Revised	245,900	409,800	450,100	479,600	509,800	566,417

Reliever Forecast Activity	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Total G.A. Based Aircraft	1,376	1,405	1,433	1,461	1,492	1,521
Total G.A. Operations	431,873	449,429	467,694	486,704	506,487	527,072

Aviation System Plan Content⁽⁶⁾

Aviation Planning Process

Aviation Plan

- First plans standalone – now section of TPP
- System statements: Compiled after TPP adoption, informs local communities of regional system needs (regional airports)

Long Term Comprehensive Plans

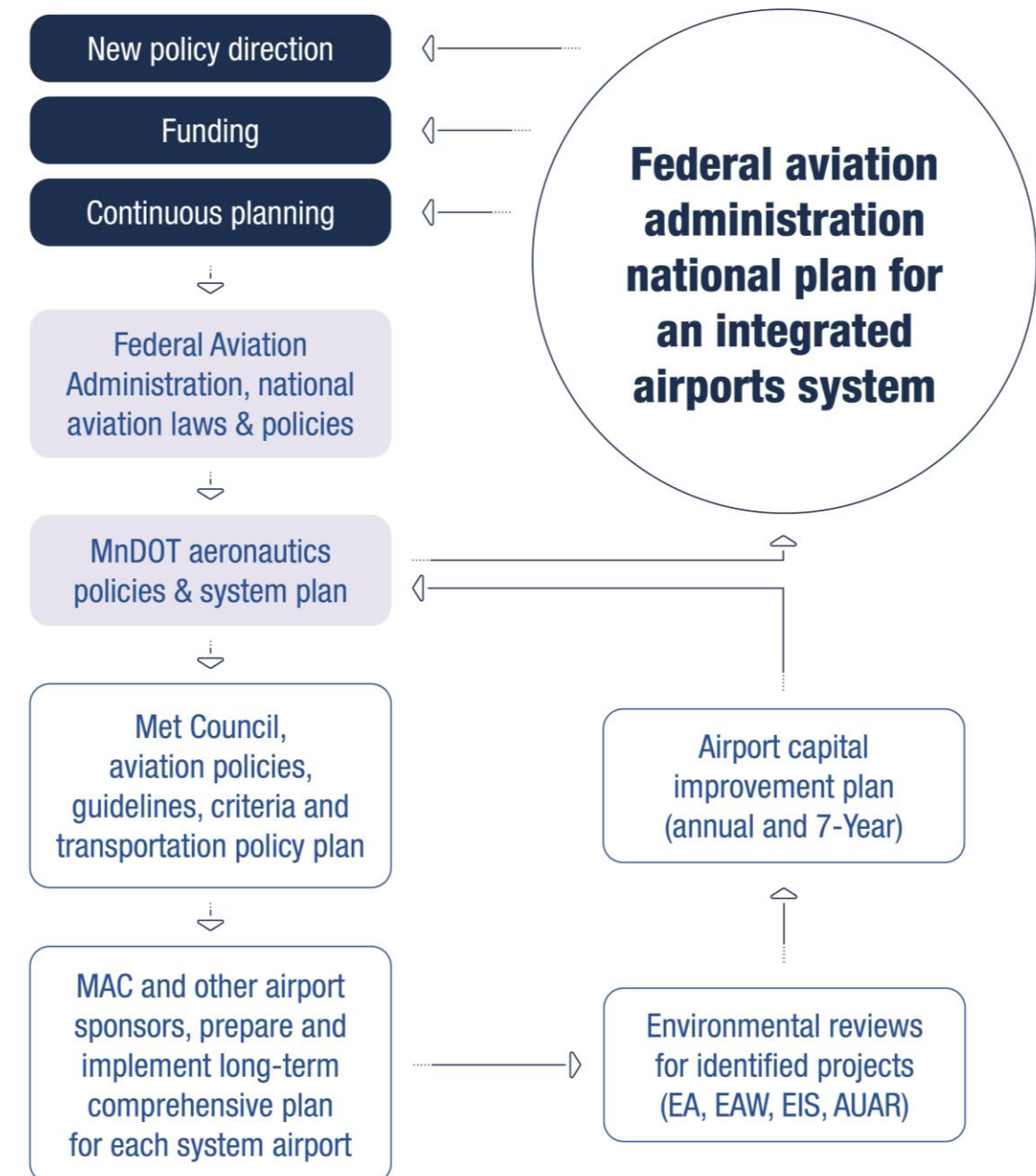
Environmental Compatibility

- Noise/land use/safety
- Natural environment impacts
- Environmental review requirements

Federal Compliance

- Federal government much more involved with aviation planning than other modes

MAC Capital Improvement Plan



Aviation System Plan Content⁽⁷⁾

Aviation Planning Process

Long Term Comprehensive Plans

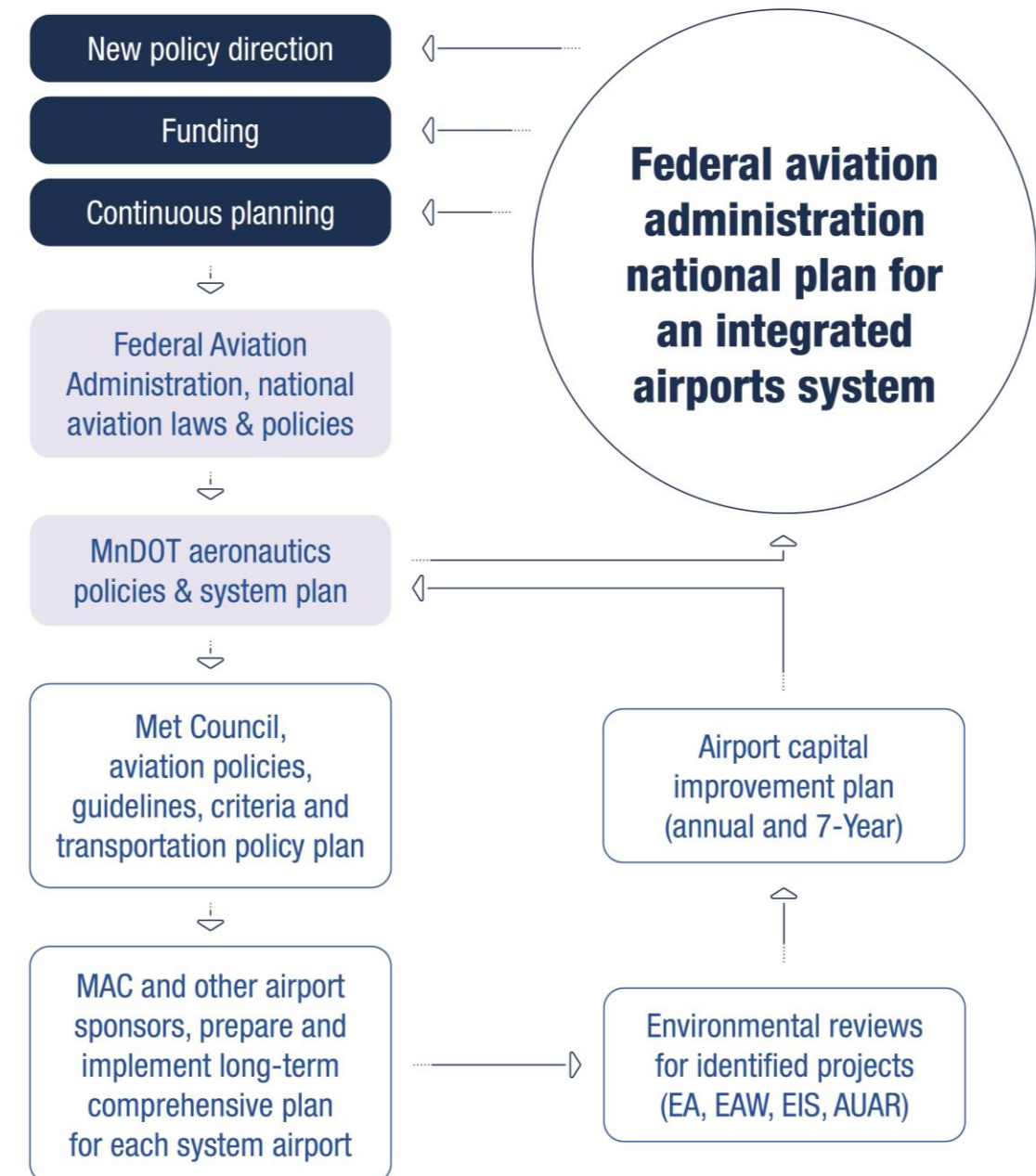
Long Term Comprehensive Plans are a major component of the Aviation System Plan

Planning documents for airports which identify projected aircraft activity, high level impacts and phased facility needs

- MSP – approved in 2024 and incorporated into TPP
- Flying Cloud – to be reviewed in 2025 and incorporated into update

Updating LTCP requirements per feedback through review process to align with community desires and reality of long-term airport planning.

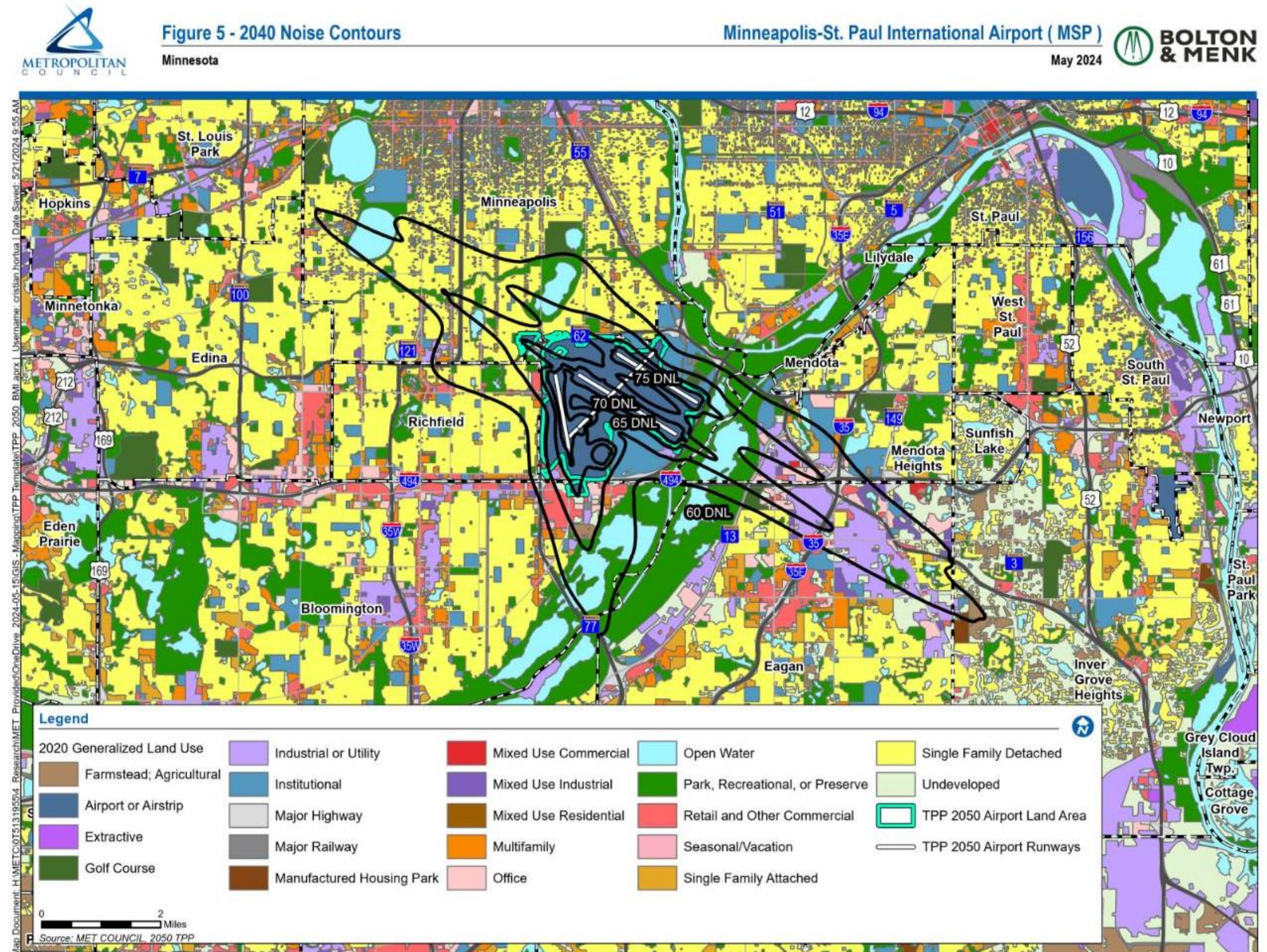
- Aligning plan development timeline with community comprehensive planning requirements – every ten years
- Better identifying when expected environmental considerations to be reviewed/addressed
 - LTCP vs environmental review period (EA, EAW, EIS)



Aviation System Plan Content⁽⁸⁾

Land Use Compatibility

- Major component of the Plan – regional airports and surrounding land use compatibility.
- Met Council maintains the Builders Guide to Mitigating Aircraft Noise in New Residential Construction.
 - Mitigation measures for aircraft noise for land use and construction.
- Plan will now include standardized exposure maps with existing land use data (updated 2040 contours for MSP and Flying Cloud)
- Plan also includes additional locations where aviation activity may take place to aid local planning considerations (helipads, private runways)



Next Steps



Public Comment Draft Process

- Information item
 - ~~TAC Planning: 5/8~~
 - ~~TAB: 6/18~~
 - ~~Transportation Committee: 6/23~~
- Action item
 - TAC Planning: 7/10
 - TAC: 8/6
 - *TAB: 8/20*
 - *Transportation Committee: 9/7*
 - *Metropolitan Council: 9/24*
- *Public comment period: 9/25-11/8*
- *Public Hearing: 10/29*

Thank You

Joe Widing

Senior Planner (Aviation), MTS

Joseph.Widing@metc.state.mn.us

To learn more:

<https://metro council.org/transportation/system/aviation.aspx>

Or follow the QR Code:

