

Chapter 13: Airport

Introduction

The St. Cloud Regional Airport, owned and operated by the City of St. Cloud, is located off of Trunk Highway 10, on Del Tone Road (Sherburne County Road 7). Conveniently located 50 miles northwest of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area, it serves as the gateway to central Minnesota for air travel. Since 1969, the St. Cloud Regional Airport has provided a direct link to the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport-providing a vital connection to the Nation's air transportation system. Many area businesses, aviation enthusiasts, and students have benefited from the airport and the economic development the facility has and will continue to foster. The Airport is widely regarded as the fastest growing airport in the region-serving private, commercial and corporate operations.

Airports play an important role in guiding the development of a safe, affordable, and balanced transportation system by providing effective passenger and freight transportation (see Chapter 7: Freight). Although currently the Airport does not facilitate freight, its proximity to the Twin Cities may lead to an increase in this type of service. The Airport primarily serves smaller corporate and private planes, with limited commercial service. Northwest Airlin/Mesaba Aviation provides commercial air service to the St. Cloud Area offering roundtrip service daily with six arrivals and departures to/from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Strategies

Planning for the future of air transportation in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area involves 1) Providing safe and convenient access to airport services, 2) Regulating land use and development around the Airport, and 3) Exploring potential opportunities in an effort to maintain and improve infrastructure (airport and supplemental).

Safety and Convenience

Advanced safety measures can increase the Airport's attractiveness and viability as a mode of transportation. Facility improvements such as the runway extension can ultimately benefit the airport by attracting national and/or domestic passenger and freight services.

Connectivity

Connectivity of the airport to major attraction areas and neighborhoods within the region is very important. These direct connections are vital. For example, the amount of time that it takes to get to and from the airport to local areas is affected greatly by traffic on Trunk Highways 23 and 10. These corridors act as the main thoroughfares for traffic traveling to the airport from downtown St. Cloud and most of the Metropolitan Area. Because of extensive commercial development along portions of TH 23 corridor, traffic flow has been hindered by the addition of signals and multiple access points (see Chapter 6: Access Management). These obstacles disrupt the flow of traffic and add to the inefficiencies of the entire system.

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Land Use

The discussion of land use surrounding the Airport involves considerations of residential and commercial development (refer to Chapter 3: Land Use), noise, and environmental issues. Development could create safety hazards when it becomes too close to the Airport's flight patterns.

Short Term Strategies

- Encourage proper land use restrictions to maintain safety standards.
- Provide improved facilities, as needed, to accommodate business aviation needs.
- Encourage the development of air cargo facilities if increased needs of freight capacity arise through the early allotment of funds.
- Encourage purchase and use of current technologies and equipment to maintain a competitive edge to help foster growth.

Long Term Strategies

- Upgrade and improve airport facilities, as needed, to accommodate projected commercial demands.
- Provide proper connectivity to and from the Airport from all areas of the region.
- Review the level of service on access roads to the Airport and recommend capital or operating improvements to the corridors to maintain a minimum level of service "D".
- Prevent future incompatible development near the Airport by monitoring project proposals within the airport influence area.
- Assess impacts of the airport as the City of St. Cloud Land Use and the Airport Master Plans are updated.
- Identify and acquire any land or property, which may be needed in the future for airport use or facility expansion.
- Encourage domestic and national air cargo partnerships, when feasible.