

On Tuesday, September 11, the FAA failed their biggest safety check. According to CNN, 66% of airport security gates failed security checks before September 11.

The Star Tribune reported on the week of October 5, that the FAA's security chief resigned.

And here in our small town, the FAA and MAC want to throw out the only safety check Eden Prairie has, a 23 year old Ordinance meant to keep (FCM) Flying Cloud Airport from expanding beyond the limitations of planned community development, and beyond the limitations of Ordinance 51.

Mac thinks they can barter with us, parks and playing fields for extended runways and an increase of more than 200% more jets flying over Eden Prairie by 2005 and all because the FAA will stop there grant funding unless MAC gets rid of 51.

Mac and the FAA want us to live with no safety restrictions in place, otherwise, according to them we'll be discriminating and interfering with interstate commerce. They think we exist for aviation; we think aviation exists for us.

They want to develop and implement a plan to divert general aviation operations from Minneapolis St. Paul, even though GA operations at MSP account for only 10% of total operations, and even though capacity and delays resulted from mismanagement and overscheduling.

Mac and the FAA want us to swallow their rhetoric, opinion, forecasts, which in one breath feign legitimacy, in the next impossibility, to forecast the real noise and environmental effects of increased jet operations with absolute accuracy.

"There will be no jetport at FCM," Mac has said.

According to Andy Cebula of NATA, the National Air Transportation Association "the fractional industry will continue to grow, and from the FAA's point of view, growth is why they're looking at it."

That means fractional share operations, planes-for-hire, are increasing in demand. Jetways at [www.jetways.com](http://www.jetways.com) based in Minnesota promises business owners they'll "travel on their schedule, not the airlines." Connecting flights are alleviated, there are thousands of locations to pick from unlike commercial hubs, no airline terminal hassles-- and all from convenient small airports like FCM.

Dream come true for pilots, business travelers and those who would profit from the FAA's new proposed regulatory changes, which would essentially give commercial fractional ownership operations non-commercial status and allow larger for hire transports to do business out of FCM.

Not a dream come true for local communities with small airports.

While airports are now operating with heightened security: the National Guard is stationed at security check points at MSP, Rochester, Duluth and all regional hubs. According to AOPA's Phil Boyer some 282 airports in 30 metropolitan areas remain effectively closed to VFR operations and Part 91 general aviation operations remain prohibited within 25 nautical miles of the DCA and JFK VORS.

Mac has slashed their budget and canceled projects, in what the Pioneer Press describes as a situation with a "diminished outlook for travelers and the new security precautions," but the expansion process, repealing Ordinance 51 and the EIS go forward and all because the FAA wants to get rid of 51.

Nevertheless public fear in Eden Prairie insists on caution and mediation to retain Ordinance 51. We've appealed to Rep. Ramstad and Senators Dayton and Wellstone who all have supported our position and contacted the FAA on our behalf.

In the New York Times, September 20 issue, Andrew Revkin reported that, "safety at small GA airports has gaping holes." With the focus on safeguarding commercial carriers, many experts believe that private charter and corporate aircraft are now more vulnerable than ever at small airports that have virtually no security. Small airports lack measures like security fences, lights or guards; there is no security to guard parked planes; small planes could be stolen and loaded with dangerous chemicals; small planes can also skim treetops and avoid radar detection.

Yet the FAA wants to increase business operations at small airports with these new rule changes.

We were too secure in our freedoms and too gullible, in that we didn't demand more assurances for our safety. Maybe Mac or the FAA would even question whether security is an issue at small airports? But the rest of the nation, as well as representatives of aviation businesses-- who recently met with federal law enforcement and aviation officials to discuss ways to reduce the risks at small airports, like James K. Coyne, the president of the National Air Transportation Association, who represents 11,000 propeller planes and 9,000 jets-- believe security at small GA airports is a major concern.

Santa Monica understands people are concerned about security. So, the Santa Monica airport, one of the busiest single runway general aviation airports in the country, already has a security update with new security measures listed on their web site at:

[http://pen.ci.santamonica.ca.us/resource\\_mgmt/airport](http://pen.ci.santamonica.ca.us/resource_mgmt/airport).

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24 hour, 7 day a week airport security, supervised by the Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) and augmented by regular patrols by SMPD officers. Our security guards are constantly patrolling the perimeter of the airport and all areas that could be accessed by the public.

Access to the field is controlled by security gates with coded locks.

Consistent with FAA security restrictions for general aviation airports in response to the Sept. 11 tragedies, aircraft flying under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) that have filed a flight plan with the FAA that includes individual pilots, air taxi or charter operations, and flight training limited to non-turbojet powered aircraft 6,000 pounds or less gross weight are permitted to fly at Santa Monica Airport. News reporting, traffic watch, banner towing, sight-seeing, and blimp/airship operations are prohibited at and around Santa Monica Airport.

All Airport tenants and our fixed based operators are keenly aware of the security issues and are watchful of suspicious people - the FBOs are required to conduct security sweeps for their respective facilities.

Charter/rental aircraft companies have a regular, familiar customer base, so operators would be extremely cautious with new customers looking to rent planes.

We'll be monitoring changes at the major airports to see what additional safeguards could be applied to the smaller general aviation airports, something the FAA is also doing.

We're in close communication with the FAA at this time and if they direct additional safeguards be put in place, Santa Monica Airport will be the first to comply.

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Despite many many calls into the Eden Prairie police regarding security issues in Eden Prairie and at FCM, the only response so far from Mac was a full color, 6 page public relations attempt-- sent out in September-- to convince Eden Prairie of Mac facts like this one, "safety is rule number one."

There are facts and there are facts. Here are some Mac "facts" from their full color spread.

Mac Fact: Mac is funded through airport revenues, not through income or property taxes.

The reason Mac didn't want the FAA to close down their parking is because much of their revenue comes from parking. Wonder who pays for that?

Mac Fact: In accordance with Federal Regulations, the security checkpoints through which all travelers must pass are administered by the airlines, not by Mac staff.

But, in the Star Tribune on Mar 8, 2001, Gordon Longton, the airport's security coordinator, said that although many airports have installed upgraded security equipment, employee behavior still causes security breaches. At MSP, he said, "people have a tendency to hold doors for people." Because airport workers broke security rules, the Metropolitan Airports Commission faced six federal fines totaling up to \$6,600. According to the article, due to stepped-up enforcement back in March, officials would have to sharply increase the penalty for employees who are caught allowing other people, including other employees, to enter secure areas without required identification. Even after the tragic events of September 11, MSP closed due to an employee rushing past the proper security check points.

Mac's facts are unreliable; Mac's agreements are untenable.

In the midst of a national disaster, and of industry liquidation, and of anticipated significant reduction in flying, Mac and the FAA are bent on expansion. And, because General Aviation pays virtually nothing at MSP's gate, sizeable leases at reliever hubs would put much more in Mac's pocket.

Lest anyone forget, business is Mac and the FAA's number one priority: profit maximization first, community and quality of life last.

What we thought was a ticket to a yellow brick road in the sky was the price of safety for a nation in a hurry..

