Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport:

Looking Back, Moving Forward

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From Race Track to Flight Tracks

- Twin Cities Motor Speedway held first race in 1915 and went bankrupt in 1917
- Twin Cities Aero Club formed to help recruit and train pilots for war
Air Mail and Guard Detail

• Aero Club joined National Guard to develop flying field
• Leased speedway site from Snelling Field Corporation
• Raised $30,000 to level field and build first hangar

• Chicago-Twin Cities mail route began August 1920. Suspended in June 1921 after series of crashes
• State built three hangars and other buildings at airfield for 109th Squadron of National Guard
Airfield Renamed for Local Heroes

- Speedway Field renamed **Wold-Chamberlain Field** for first two area pilots who died in combat.
- **Ernest Wold** and **Cyrus Chamberlain** were killed in aerial combat in Chateau-Thierry, France.
St. Paul Downtown Airport

• **Competition** between Minneapolis and St. Paul made joint operation of new airport difficult

• **St. Paul** wanted its own airport and bought 150 acres for it along the Mississippi River
New Air Mail Effort, Airline

• 1925: Kelly Act authorized Postmaster General to contract for air mail services

• Charles Dickenson received Twin Cities-Chicago contract, but soon lost it due to equipment and labor issues

• Local businessmen met with Henry Ford and others in Detroit and raised money to create Northwest Airways in August 1926

Northwest awarded air mail route, operating out of old wooden hangar built by Aero Club
Minneapolis Municipal Airport

- With St. Paul developing its own airport, **Minneapolis Park Board** purchased Wold-Chamberlain in 1928, one year after Northwest Airways carried its first paying passenger.
- Airport renamed **Minneapolis Municipal Airport**
- First **concessions** contract awarded in 1928, selling soft drinks, sandwiches, popcorn and peanuts.
Military, Passenger Growth

- 9th Naval District established reserve air squadron in 1928
- 1932: National Guard moved to St. Paul
- U.S. Marine Reserve unit joined Navy at Wold-Chamberlain
- Northwest Airways created nation’s first air-rail link, with service connecting Minneapolis to coasts via Chicago

An administration building was constructed at the Minneapolis Municipal Airport in 1930
Air Mail Machinations

- Congressional investigation into fraud in awarding of routes led to cancelation of all domestic air mail in February 1934
- No airlines awarded air mail routes in past could bid on routes
- Airlines reorganized; though not implicated in investigations, Northwest Airways became Northwest Airlines, Inc., and carried mail by May
- Also began direct flights to West Coast

Runways were first paved in the 1930s
MSP Sees Major Expansion

- Park Board began bonding for construction of hangar to house Northwest’s new 21-passenger DC-3, which began service in 1939.
- Pending war and increased passenger service led to doubling size of airport, extending runways and expanding Naval Reserve.
- Northwest added shop and office building to new, Park Board-financed hangar.
- Park Board similarly built hangar for Mid-Continent Airlines.
Looking to the Future

- May 1942: Civil Aeronautics Administration assumed control tower operations.
- Air Terminal Committee established to study best ways to develop air service for area going forward.

One of the first tools for air traffic control: the light gun.

Flight line renovations, 1940s.
Regional Approach to Aviation

- **Air Terminal Committee recommendations:**
  - Minneapolis and St. Paul Airports should be **combined** at Wold-Chamberlain Field
  - Minneapolis should find **new, larger airport site** in case second terminal is needed. 1,500 acres in Brooklyn Township identified.

- **Gov. Harold Stassen calls for creation of a metropolitan airports commission**
- **Novel approach aimed at making the Twin Cities a major gateway**
- **Legislation creating Metropolitan Airports Commission** passed in 1943
MAC’s Mission

Promote air transportation and develop metro area as an aviation center while minimizing environmental impacts on area residents

First MAC meeting, First Chairman Lewis G. Castle of Duluth, Center
Study of Regional Needs

• Among first steps: MAC commissioned a study to guide development of regional facilities
• Study recommended:
  – Developing Wold-Chamberlain as major air terminal
  – Making Holman Field part of a secondary airports system
  – Reserving land in the north metro for a second major airport site
MAC System Begins

- August 1944: MAC assumed control of Holman Field and began overseeing other aviation in the Twin Cities.
- Changed Minneapolis Municipal Airport to Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Airport/Wold-Chamberlain Field.
Post-war Growth

- In 1947, airlines still accounted for only 10% of MSP’s operations.
- 1949: MAC received federal funds to:
  - Extend north-south runway
  - Construct new 6,500-ft. runway
  - Extend NE-SW runway by 1,800 feet
- Initially, MSP Metropolitan Airport was served only by Northwest and Mid-Continent airlines.
- First large commercial cargo flight arrived November 1945.
MSP Becomes International

- Northwest began service to Orient in 1947 through “Great Circle Route” over pole, using DC-4s to serve Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai and Manila
- MSP’s name changed to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport/Wold-Chamberlain Field
Expanded Air Service

- **Inland** and **Western Airlines** merged in 1947
- **Capital Airlines** began service at MSP in 1947
- **Wisconsin Central** began MSP service 1948, changing its name in 1952 to **North Central Airlines**
Northwest Expansion

- 1949: Northwest maintenance base groundbreaking, with Holman-based overhaul activities moved to MSP in 1959
- 1956: NWA entered into agreement with MAC for new operations space/headquarters, completed in 1961
New Passenger Terminal

- 1958: Construction began on new 600,000 sq. ft. terminal that opened in 1962
  - 24 aircraft gates
  - 2 concourses
- Other improvements:
  - New control tower
  - Fueling system
  - Western Airlines hangar
  - Access roads
  - 2,500-space parking lot and upgraded runways and taxiways
Other MSP Improvements

- New Air Traffic Control tower completed in 1964
- 1968: United moves to new hangar/cargo facility
- 1969: NWA begins to construct new wide-body maintenance base

In 1969, a new North Central Airlines main base and headquarters were completed at MSP
Air Service Expansion

- 1957: *Ozark* begins service to MSP
- 1960: *Eastern Airlines* begins service
- 1965: *American Airlines*
- Others already at MSP: *NWA, Western, United, North Central* and *Braniff* (formerly Mid-Continent)

- 1961: *First jet service* (NWA to Chicago)
- Runway 11R/29L extended to 10,000 ft.
- 1970: NWA begins first wide-body, *747 service*
- 1979: NWA begins single-carrier *transatlantic service* to Copenhagen, Stockholm and Glasgow
2nd Airport Controversy

- 1969: Metropolitan Council rejects MAC plan to acquire **Ham Lake site** for second major airport. Met Council reconsidered in 1972, by which time MAC determined second airport unnecessary.

- 1973: Legislative attempt to make MAC part of Met Council fails. **MAC board expanded** to include suburbs.
1970s MSP Expansion

- 1970: Runway 11L/29R opened with full 8,200 ft.
- First bag carousels installed
- Servicemen’s Center opened
- 1971: Gold Concourse opened
- Second parking deck completed
1970s Expansion

• 1972: Green Concourse and additional parking expansion
• 1974: In-pavement airfield lighting system
• 1975: MAC purchased United’s hangar and converted it into Humphrey Terminal, which opened in 1976
Deregulation: More Competition

- Numerous airlines began serving MSP following deregulation in 1978:
  - 1978: TWA, People Express & Southern Airways (which merged with North Central in 1979 to become Republic)
  - 1981: Continental and Midway
  - 1982: Texas International
  - 1983: Sun Country (founded by former Braniff pilots)
  - 1984: Delta & Frontier

Republic Airlines CEO Stephen Wolf in 1986
Mergers and Expansions

- **1984:** Seven-level, 2,000-space parking expansion
- **1985:** Wold-Chamberlain terminal rededicated as Charles Lindbergh Terminal
- **1986:** Gold Concourse (G) expansion completed, with MSP’s first moving sidewalks. Green (C) Concourse expanded again
- **1986:** MSP’s two largest carriers, **Northwest and Republic,** merge into nation’s 4th largest airline, creating strong **hub**
- **1987:** Delta bought Western Airlines and Ozark merged with TWA
Dual-track Planning

- 1986: Concessions renovation
- 1987: Humphrey Terminal expansion
- 1989: **Dual-track planning** directed by Legislature
- 1996: Legislature directs MAC to expand MSP at **current site**
- 1998: **MSP: Building a Better Airport** Program gets underway
Building a Better Airport

- New **Runway** 17/35
- 30 regional **gates**
- 12 new jet gates
- New **Humphrey Terminal**
- Underground & elevated **trams**
- Light **rail**
- New **auto rental** facilities
- Stormwater **ponds**
- **De-icing** facilities
- Expanded **cargo** facilities
Paradigm Shift Among Airlines

**Old Paradigm**
- Market share
- High operating costs
- Older, less efficient planes
- Focus on fares

**New Paradigm**
- Shareholder profits
- Financial discipline
- Right-sized, fuel-efficient fleet
- Base fares + fees

**Boom and Bust**

**Sustainable Profits?**
Continued Consolidation

nwa → Delta
Continental Airlines → United Airlines
airTran → SOUTHWEST.COM
U.S. Airways → American Airlines
2030 Long Term Plan

• More than **50 million** passengers by 2030
• Will need **20-30** more aircraft gates
• Will need another **18,000** parking spaces
• No new runways
• **Demand driven**
• **$2 billion+** investment
A Long Way From Speedway
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