DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Introduction and Assessment of Prior Efforts White Paper

2020 State Aviation System Plan (SASP) Phase I

April 10, 2019

Contents

State Aviation System Plan – What is the SASP?

The Minnesota State Aviation System Plan (SASP) provides guidance for the future development of aviation in Minnesota and a description and assessment of performance of the aviation system.

The 2020 SASP is being completed in two phases. One of the key focus areas of Phase I was to assess and evaluate previous SASP efforts. This white paper summarizes this assessment. While this white paper provides a summary of what was learned in this process, additional discussion on the effectiveness of prior efforts and previous SASP components are included in the companion white papers developed as part of Phase I. These additional white papers also identify any changes being made to the 2020 SASP in response to the assessment of previous SASP efforts.

Minnesota GO

In early 2011, MnDOT launched the Minnesota GO 50-year statewide visioning process to better align the transportation system with what Minnesotans expect for their quality of life, economy, and natural environment.

Vision

A vision is a description of a desired future. It answers the question "what are we trying to achieve?" Minnesota GO's vision for Transportation is:

> *Minnesota's multimodal transportation system maximizes the health of people, the environment, and our economy.*

The transportation system:

- Connects Minnesota's primary assets – the people, natural resources, and businesses within the state – to each other and to markets and resources outside the state and country
- Provides safe, convenient, efficient, and effective movement of people and goods
- Is flexible and nimble enough to adapt to changes in society, technology, the environment, and the economy

The question "how will we do it?" is answered in the individual MnDOT statewide and modal plans as well as through tribal, regional, and local planning efforts.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will direct policy and investment decisions for all forms of transportation throughout the state. The guiding principles are intended to be used collectively and are listed below in no particular order.

- **Leverage public investments to achieve multiple purposes:** The transportation system should support other public purposes, such as environmental stewardship, economic competitiveness, public health, and energy independence.
- **Ensure accessibility:** The transportation system must be accessible and safe for users of all abilities and incomes. The system must provide access to key resources and amenities throughout communities.
- **Build to a maintainable scale:** Consider and minimize long-term obligations–don't overbuild. The scale of the system should reflect and respect the surrounding physical and social context of the facility. The transportation system should affordably contribute to the overall quality of life and prosperity of the state.
- **Ensure regional connections:** Key regional centers need to be connected to each other through multiple modes of transportation.
- **Integrate safety:** Systematically and holistically improve safety for all forms of transportation. Be proactive, innovative, and strategic in creating safe options.
- **Emphasize reliable and predictable options:** The reliability of the system and predictability of travel times are frequently as important as or more important than speed. Prioritize multiple multimodal options over reliance on a single option.
- **Strategically fix the system:** Some parts of the system may need to be reduced while other parts are enhanced or expanded to meet changing demand. Strategically maintain and upgrade critical existing infrastructure.
- **Use partnerships:** Coordinate across sectors and jurisdictions to make transportation projects and services more efficient.

The SASP should align with the guiding principles set forth in the Minnesota GO Vision.

MnDOT Family of Plans

MnDOT is responsible for developing plans not only for aeronautics, but also for other modes of travel including transit, walking and biking, freight and passenger rail, and highways. These plans, known as modal plans, receive a degree of policy direction from the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP), which is MnDOT's highest level policy plan for transportation. The SMTP translates the Minnesota GO 50-year Vision into policy direction for all types of transportation and all transportation partners.

The Minnesota GO 50-year vision is also supported by a family of plans including modal and system plans. These plans build off of the objectives and strategies in the multimodal plan and help to identify what the overall direction means for each type of transportation – transit, walking, bicycling, highways, freight, aviation, rail, and ports and waterways.

Using these plans, MnDOT is able to plan for all the ways people and goods move throughout Minnesota – individually for each mode and together as a multimodal system. The MnDOT Family of plans is depicted in **Figure 1**.
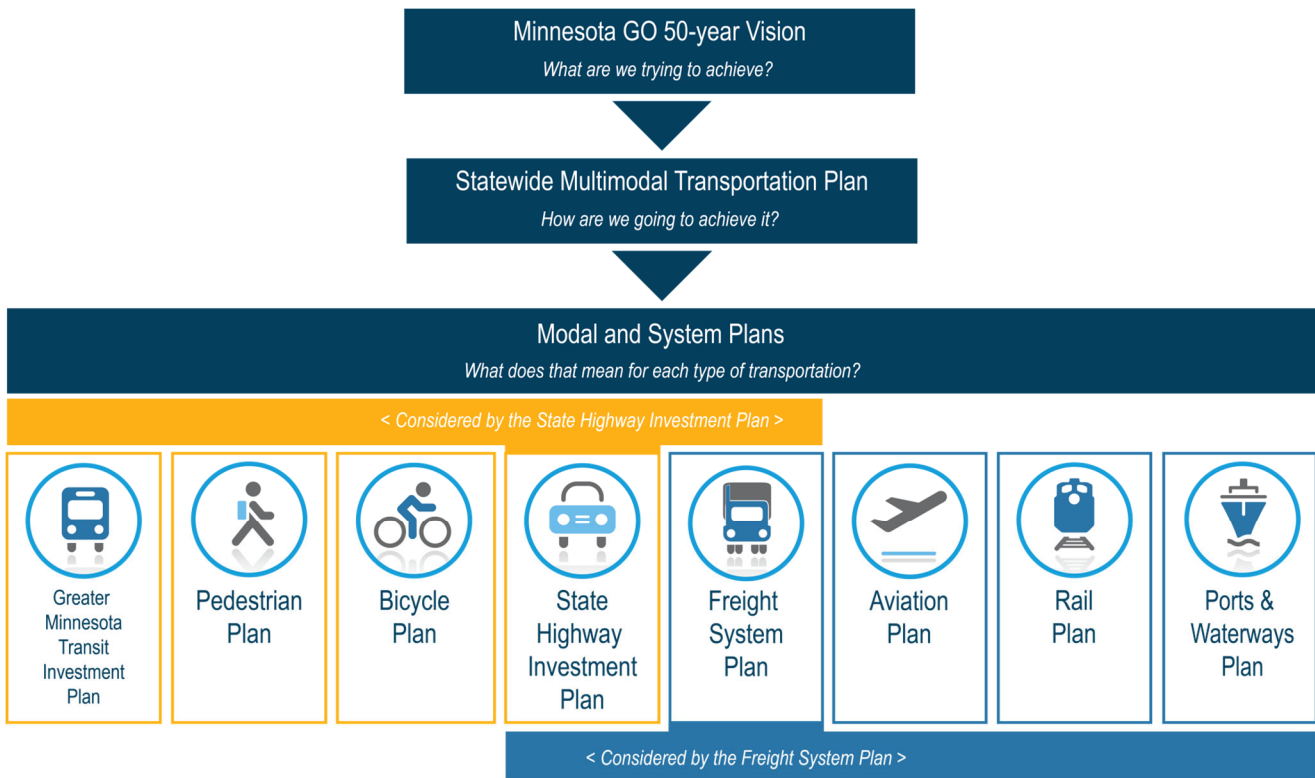
Figure 1 – MnDOT Family of Plans
Source: MnDOT

Previous Minnesota State Aviation System Plans

The Minnesota SASP is updated every five to seven years to meet the needs of the system and to align with statewide planning policies. The most recent plan was completed in 2012. Other recent SASPs were completed in the years shown in the timeline in **Figure 2**.
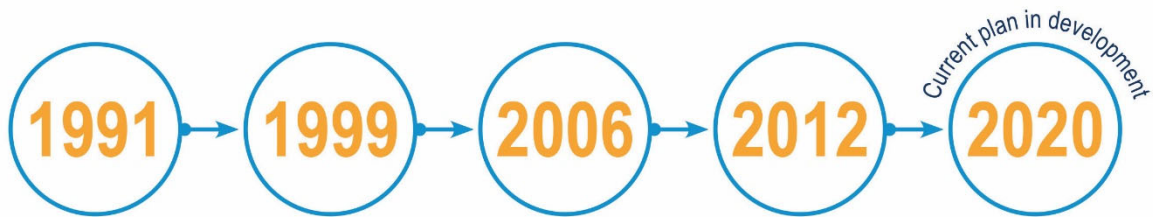

Figure 2 – Timeline of State Aviation System Plans
Source: MnDOT Office of Aeronautics, SEH

2012 State Aviation System Plan Overview

The 2012 SASP identified a vision for aviation in Minnesota.

Minnesota's Vision for Aviation

> ***Minnesota's Aviation System will enable safe, fast, and reliable air transportation for the citizens and businesses of Minnesota through partnership and innovation.***

Additionally, the 2012 SASP outlined how this vision was going to be achieved through identifying goals and strategies for the aviation system. Other major components of the 2012 SASP included an inventory of the system, development of activity forecasts, a summary of commercial air service and identification of air service strategies, identification of airport facility requirements, evaluation of system performance, development of an investment plan, and system recommendations. The 2012 SASP also included a future vision of aviation in Minnesota which looked beyond the 20-year SASP planning horizon.

2020 State Aviation System Plan Process

The 2020 SASP is being completed in two phases. The first phase focuses on what is directing the plan, what will impact aviation, and how we will guide ourselves moving forward. As part of evaluating what is directing this plan, MnDOT reviewed the Minnesota GO vision and guiding principles, the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP), and assessed the previous SASP efforts, focusing on the 2012 SASP. This white paper summarizes the results of this assessment.

Additional white papers developed as part of Phase I document the results of Step 2, identify and analyze trends that will impact aviation (see **Figure 3** which describes each step in the 2020 SASP process), and Step 3, review and refine objectives, strategies, airport classification and performance metrics.

Following Phase I, Phase 2 of the 2020 SASP will include collecting data to analyze system performance, development of a work plan, and preparation of the 2020 SASP document. MnDOT aims to create a continuous SASP which will more continually collect data and analyze system performance.

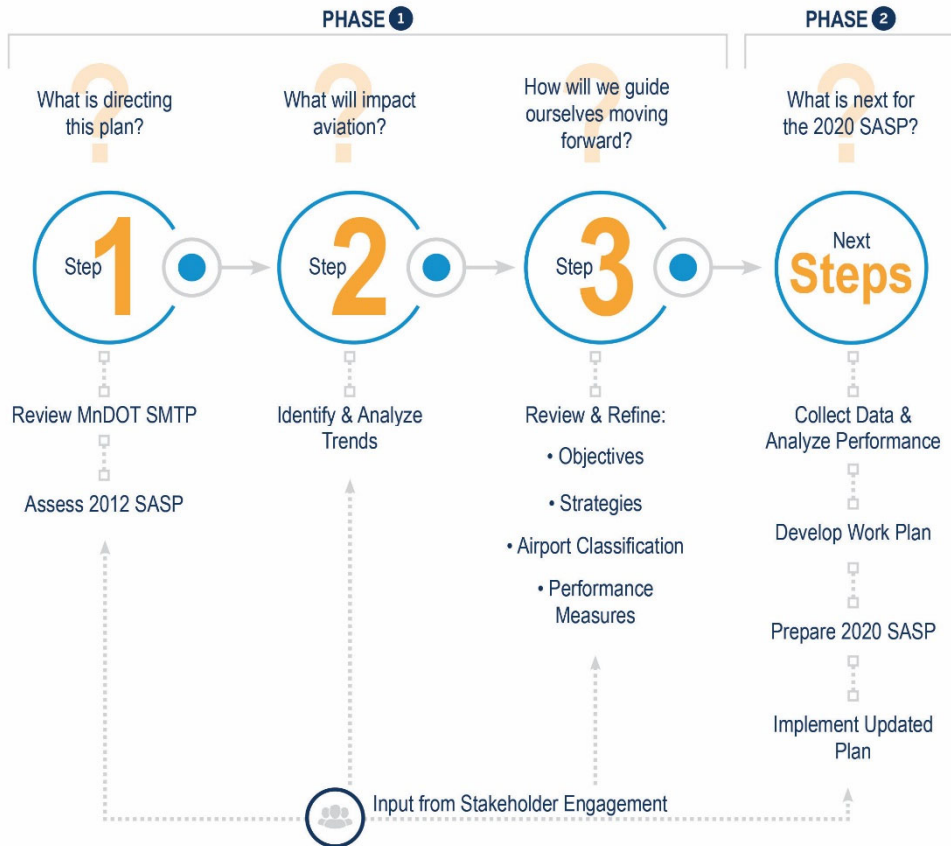The 2020 SASP process is depicted in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 – 2020 State Aviation System Plan Process

Ancillary Plans

Throughout Phase I and II of the 2020 SASP, MnDOT will work to identify ancillary plans that together with the SASP will create a MnDOT Aeronautics "Family of Plans". These plans will be developed to support the SASP. Ancillary plans and assessments already completed by MnDOT Aeronautics include the Statewide Aviation Economic Impact Study and the Pavement Condition Assessments. Additional plans and the appropriate update frequency will be identified throughout the 2020 SASP efforts.

Assessment of Prior Efforts

At the beginning of Phase I of the 2020 SASP, MnDOT assessed prior SASP efforts in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, what worked well and what could use improvement. This assessment summarizes what was learned in the process.

Summary of Outreach Methods

As part of the assessment process, MnDOT Aeronautics engaged stakeholders in many ways to learn how people used the plan and to obtain feedback on previous SASP efforts. Outreach included internal MnDOT stakeholders, the aviation community, two separate SASP committees as well as the aviation consultant community. The various in-person outreach methods are summarized in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4 – In-Person Outreach Methods – Assessment of Prior Efforts

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder input helped identify what worked well in the previous (2012) SASP and what could use improvement in the 2020 SASP. The following are themes documented through the outreach process.

What Worked Well in the 2012 SASP?

- The map graphics included in the plan were an easy way to share and interpret information.
- The activity forecast information presented at the system plan level was useful and helped influenced local planning decisions.
- The report card (5-sheet information section on each airport) was very helpful. This summary information was helpful for individual airports to better understand how their airport was doing

compared to statewide goals. The report card was also a useful tool for airports to use locally to share airport information with their local stakeholders.

- While not part of the 2012 SASP, stakeholders indicated that the economic impact calculator included as part of the Minnesota Statewide Airport Economic Impact Study was very useful.

What Could Use Improvement in the 2020 SASP?

- The SASP should include better ways to educate the public. This could include better summary documentation or a tool kit for stakeholders to use to share information about the SASP or ancillary studies. Materials in this toolkit should be synthesized and focused.
- The SASP should have easier web access for sponsors to gather information about their airport. This could include summary information from report cards, pavement condition reports, economic impact studies, and other efforts.
- The SASP could use additional information on NextGen (FAA's modernization of America's air transportation system), its rollout, and the impact on the Minnesota Aviation System.
- Comparison tools/information for airports to compare themselves against other similar airports would be helpful.
- The SASP should better clarify which guidance is required versus recommended. Any guidance should include rationale as to the background and reasoning for the guidance. Where appropriate, SASP guidance should include clarification or information on how it compares to FAA guidance.
- The existing plan is very lengthy. The future SASP should be focused, visual, and easy to read.
- The existing plan data was only accurate the moment it was collected and MnDOT did not continuously update the data. Continuous performance evaluation was not possible because data was not updated. Future SASP efforts should aim to create a continuous way of monitoring SASP data and performance. The process and responsibility to maintain current data should be well planned.
- Future SASP efforts could include recommendations for funding which would help the state prioritize funding decisions.
- The clear zone policy should be integrated into the SASP.
- The SASP could benefit from high level recommendations on the size of the system, is it adequate, too large, too small?
- The SASP should discuss and integrate drones

Additional stakeholder feedback was gathered on SASP goals (objectives), strategies, airport classification, and system and airport metrics (measures and indicators). That feedback is integrated into the individual white papers on those topics. The white papers also summarize any changes being made to the 2020 SASP in response to the assessment of previous SASP efforts.