



METROPOLITAN AIRPORTS COMMISSION

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Operations at MAC General Aviation Airports Increased 8.3% in 2023 Long-term development strategy helps accommodate growth, expanded services



Aerial of St. Paul Downtown Airport (STP). Credit: Metropolitan Airports Commission

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL – General aviation airports owned and operated by the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) showed continued growth in 2023 based on newly released year-end data.

The six general aviation airports located across the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area supported 370,509 aircraft operations in 2023 (takeoffs and landings), an increase of 8.3% compared to 242,136 operations in 2022.

[Click here to view a complete summary of 2023 MAC reliever airports statistics.](#)

The 2023 growth across the six airports has been supported by a focused, long-term development strategy by the MAC. In the previous five years, the MAC invested more than \$50 million in safety and modernization projects including new runways at Crystal and Lake Elmo. Another \$30 million in capital improvements are slated to begin in 2024 for projects that include runway reconstruction, pavement rehabilitation, new lighting and improved navigation aids.

“The foundation for the 2023 growth was set in recent years by the MAC’s investments in strategic planning, services and infrastructure improvements at each of the general aviation airports around the Twin Cities area,” said MAC CEO Brian Ryks. “This long-term approach ensured that MAC was well positioned to serve the growth in recreation and corporate flying activity, and to accommodate millions of dollars in new private investments that expand services and facilities for airport tenants and users.”

The MAC’s general aviation or reliever airports provide a base for nearly 1,250 aircraft and a network of aviation businesses that support on-demand business flights, charter services, flight training, medical services, aircraft maintenance, as well as recreation and private flying. They are referred to as “reliever airports” because they relieve congestion that would otherwise impact Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP), which had [323,929 total operations in 2023](#), a 4.4% increase over 2022.

“Our airports have experienced continued growth and energy as the general aviation sector continues to build momentum across Minnesota,” said Joe Harris, director of reliever airports for the MAC. “The growth has been steady and durable, even overcoming the effects of significant snowfall that impacted our region through the first several months of 2023.”

Five of the MAC’s six reliever airports increased operations in 2023: Airlake (LVN), Anoka County-Blaine (ANE), Lake Elmo (21D), Crystal (MIC), and Flying Cloud (FCM). Lake Elmo, located east of St. Paul, reported a 29% increase in activity, totaling 41,593 operations. Flying Cloud in Eden Prairie is the busiest reliever in the system, supporting 136,622 operations in 2023 - an increase of more than 11% compared with 2022. St. Paul Downtown (STP) is the MAC’s primary business-focused general aviation airport. It logged 38,167 operations in 2022. That was an 8% decline from 2022 in part because of spring 2023 flooding that resulted in temporary runway closures and reduced airfield capacity.

Reliever Airport	2023 Operations	2022 Operations	change
Airlake (LVN)	38,678	38,268	1.1%
Anoka CTY-Blaine (ANE)	69,908	65,688	6.4%
Crystal (MIC)	45,541	42,592	6.9%
Flying Cloud (FCM)	136,622	122,281	11.7%
Lake Elmo (21D)	41,593	32,189	29.2%
St. Paul Downtown (STP)	38,167	41,592	-8.2%
Reliever System Total	370,509	342,136	8.3%

About The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC)

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) owns and operates one of the nation’s largest airport systems, including Minneapolis-St Paul International (MSP) and six general aviation airports. The MAC’s airports connect the region to the world and showcase Minnesota’s extraordinary culture to millions of passengers from around the globe who arrive or depart through MAC airports each year. Though a public corporation of the state of Minnesota, the organization is not funded by income or property taxes. Instead, the MAC’s operations are funded by rents and fees generated by users of its airports. For more information, visit www.metroairports.org.

Minneapolis-St. Paul International • Airlake • Anoka County-Blaine • Crystal • Flying Cloud • Lake Elmo • St. Paul Downtown