



# METROPOLITAN AIRPORTS COMMISSION

## News Release

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### Contact:

Jeff Lea  
MAC Strategic Communications  
[jeff.lea@mspmac.org](mailto:jeff.lea@mspmac.org)  
314-793-4240

## MSP Airport expecting increase in holiday, year-end travel Travel forecast points to 4% increase in activity into early 2026



Travelers moving through the Terminal 1 Airport Mall at MSP. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Airports Commission

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) is expecting a 4% year-over-year increase in checkpoint screenings during the busy winter holiday travel season.

More than 763,000 people are projected to pass through MSP security screening checkpoints between Dec. 19, 2025, and Jan. 5, 2026 — an 18-day period that extends across the major holidays of Christmas and New Year's Day. Including arriving and connecting passengers, approximately 1.8 million people are expected to travel through MSP during this time period.

Friday, Dec. 19, is expected to be the single busiest day ahead of Christmas, with nearly 43,000 passengers forecast to clear MSP's security checkpoints. Airlines will operate a peak of 445 departures on Friday, Dec. 19.

The days following Christmas will be even busier. More than 50,000 people are expected to be screened each day on Friday, Dec. 26, and Sunday, Dec. 28. The holiday travel boost means inbound roadways, parking ramps and terminal lobbies will be very busy at times.

"We're entering prime time for holiday travel and the start of the winter vacation season, when MSP sees an increasing number of flights to warmer and sunnier destinations," said Brian Ryks, CEO of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which owns and operates MSP. "We continue to coordinate with our airlines and federal partners to make sure we're staffed for peak traffic over the next three weeks and can provide the world-class assistance to travelers and airport visitors that MSP is known for."

Airlines at MSP are also launching service to 17 seasonal destinations in December. This includes new routes on Delta Air Lines that begin Dec. 20 to Nassau, Bahamas (weekly), and Vail, Colorado (daily through Jan. 5, then weekly).

Travelers should prepare for busy roadways and terminal curb areas due to increased passenger drop-offs and pick-ups.

[MSP recently opened a new FLEX Lane at Terminal 1](#) to help reduce congestion during peak times. The newly designated lane is on the left side of the Terminal 1 Departures Drive, located across from the primary drop-off curb. This new option offers terminal access through doors 5-8, which are connected to the Green and Gold parking ramps.

- For departures, a one-level escalator or elevator ride connects passengers to pedestrian sky bridges for a simple "up and over" path to reach the Terminal 1 ticketing lobby.
- For arrivals, passengers can return to the FLEX Lane for pick up via the sky bridges or below-ground walkway on Level T.

Drivers can always use either level of the Terminal 1 drive loop to pick up or drop off passengers.

Terminal 2 also has an alternative pick-up and drop-off area accessible in the Purple Ramp. The free [Terminal 2 Express Lane](#) provides a covered loading zone on the second level, offering quick access to the terminal via a sky bridge.

Travelers are encouraged to arrive at the airport at least two hours before a domestic flight or three hours before an international flight.

Here are some other helpful tips for upcoming travel at MSP:

- Passengers can reserve a spot in the security line for free through [MSP RESERVE](#). Reservation times vary per terminal, and availability is limited.
- Travelers can [prebook parking](#) online to guarantee a spot and capture the lowest daily rates. Bookings must be made at least 12 hours prior to your scheduled arrival time.

- Travelers in Terminal 1 should check the security wait-time boards when they enter the ticketing lobby. Passengers can access all gates from either checkpoint, but the North Checkpoint often has shorter wait times.
- To further reduce traffic congestion at curbside pick-up areas, drivers picking up passengers are encouraged to wait in advance at [MSP's free cell phone lots on Post Road](#). Drivers should stay parked until their arriving party contacts them to pick them up at either terminal.
- Review the latest TSA security screening information and tips [including identification requirements and regulated items for carry-on and checked baggage](#).

**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](http://www.metroairports.org).*

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