

## Onsite Training and Community Practice Plane Facilities at Airports

### Guidance

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| <b>Purpose</b>                 | <p>The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and best practice examples for stakeholders aiming to introduce similar initiatives related to accessibility and assistance to persons with disabilities in an airport environment.</p> <p>The case study is not intended to endorse any technology or provider, but rather provide details of the key considerations as well as various implementation models which could be adopted.</p> <p>The intended audiences may include but are not limited to: Airports, Airlines, Technology Providers, and Regulatory Bodies.</p>   |
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| <b>Scope of this Guidance</b>  | <p>This guidance is provided as a source of information to help and support industry players to implement initiatives related to accessibility and assistance to persons with disabilities in and airport environment.</p>   |
| <b>The Case Study Template</b> | <p>In some situations or jurisdictions, a prescribed case study template may be necessary that meets the local requirements of a particular business, organization, or regulatory body. For this guidance document, the following sections provide the general steps involved in developing a business case and/or case studies, including a brief explanation of their purpose, benefits, and considerations.</p>   |

# CASE STUDY

## BACKGROUND/BUSINESS NEEDS

For more than 10 years, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) has offered a program, *Navigating MSP*, to help familiarize people and families, who may find it difficult to navigate the airport and air travel, with the travel experience.

Before the Travel Confidently MSP Education Center opened with its mock airplane, the Navigating MSP program included a rudimentary aircraft practice facility for times when an actual aircraft could not be procured. Delta Air Lines, which is a partner to this program, typically provides an actual aircraft for participants of the program to use. However, aircraft are not always available. Local service animal organizations also used this facility for service animals and their handlers to practice boarding and being on an aircraft.

The previous aircraft practice facility included seats donated by Delta but that was pretty much the extent of the facility. Furthermore, it was not easily accessible by program participants, as it was on an upper level of a concourse and far down the corridor.

The opportunity to upgrade the practice experience occurred when a Delta pilot suggested the airline donate to the MSP program a mock training cabin that they were decommissioning. The mock training cabin was in Atlanta and had been used for flight crew training. The mock cabin was based on a Boeing 737 aircraft and was completely enclosed (which would provide a much more authentic experience, especially for participants who are afraid to fly). It also included a non-working restroom, a flight deck door, window cut-outs and overhead storage areas. In other words, it looked and acted much more like an airplane. Along with the mock cabin, Delta also donated 42 aircraft seats.

The MAC had not planned for this opportunity but was eager to take advantage of the generous offer.

### Drivers of Change

**Strategic Initiatives.** A practice facility is important to the program and to the MAC goal and vision to be the most accessible airport in the world. Besides the Navigating MSP program use, the new mock cabin within the Travel Confidently MSP Education Center is also now used by airport wheelchair service companies, local service animal organizations, and airport public safety personnel for training.

**Political Changes.** Equity and inclusivity have become points of discussion across many industries over the past several years, including racial, ethnic, gender, and disability disparities. The air travel industry is one of them. While the air carrier access act has been in place since 1990 and airlines and their partner airports have come a long way in providing better access, much more can be done to improve access to airports and air travel for everyone.

## BENEFITS

1. **New air travellers.** People are more likely to use air travel for their travel needs if they know they will be able to do so comfortably and with ease. The Travel Confidently MSP Education Center mock cabin provides a means of helping people who may be apprehensive about traveling by air with an opportunity to become comfortable with the process. Creating ways to ease the anxiety around air travel for more people means more people can experience the joy of air travel, who in turn spend money on flights, ground transportation, concessions, and other airport services.
2. **Reputational enhancements.** The education center goes beyond Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements, which are the baseline for airports. When an airport provides above that baseline and has a plan to market and promote its accessibility programs, the airport's reputation in the industry and across multiple demographics is enhanced.

Promotion of this facility resulted in over 1 billion media impressions across the U.S. and the world, including those who watched a national Public Broadcasting Service report based on MSP's Travel Confidently MSP Education Center. Demand for the airport's programs also increased to the point where the Navigating MSP program is booked out for months and the center is being used several times a week for other practice sessions.

3. **Fewer accidents/incidents and better outcomes.** When people have the best and most realistic tools to be properly trained, fewer accidents/incidents are likely to occur. At the Travel Confidently MSP Education Center, airport personnel responsible for safely moving people on and off aircraft and into their seats from specialized wheelchairs have a very realistic tool for practicing these tasks. The airport's public safety personnel will also use this center to practice boarding an aircraft for on-aircraft medical emergencies.

ACI <https://blog.aci.aero/airport-accessibility-is-a-human-societal-and-business-imperative/> does a great job of laying out the case for airports to fully participate in accessibility efforts.

## CONSTRAINTS

**Space.** An airport must have and prioritize using space for this type of project. In this case, the dimensions of the room were 40' x 40'. That is probably the minimum number of square feet needed to implement an onsite mock-cabin practice facility.

**Logistics.** Airports need to know how the parts of a mock cabin will be transported and brought to the designated space.

**Budget.** The cost to the MAC was relatively low. A donation of a cabin is key to keeping costs low. However, if airports have the budget for it, it would be possible to design and construct one as well.

**Personnel and Ongoing Maintenance.** As with many new amenities and services at an airport, there are long-term maintenance and administrative tasks associated with offering a mock cabin experience to travellers. Someone needs to keep a schedule and the space, and the cabin will need periodic cleaning.

### Key enablers:

1. Someone to advocate for the project and support from airport partners
2. Donated cabin and seats and the airline's willingness to take the cabin apart and ship it at its cost
3. Unused, easily accessible space

## TECHNOLOGY, PROCESS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED

This endeavour did not require new technology. The logistics of moving the mock cabin parts to Minnesota and into the airport terminal to the identified space was the most technical part of the process.

Delta Air Lines used a semi-tractor trailer with 17 pallets to haul the parts to Minnesota from Atlanta, and the airport's contractor used a forklift and pallet jacks to move the parts into the secure area and down the concourse.

The infrastructure needed was an available space, approximately 1600 square feet, that was equipped with electrical power and HVAC and fire suppression systems.

## LESSONS LEARNED

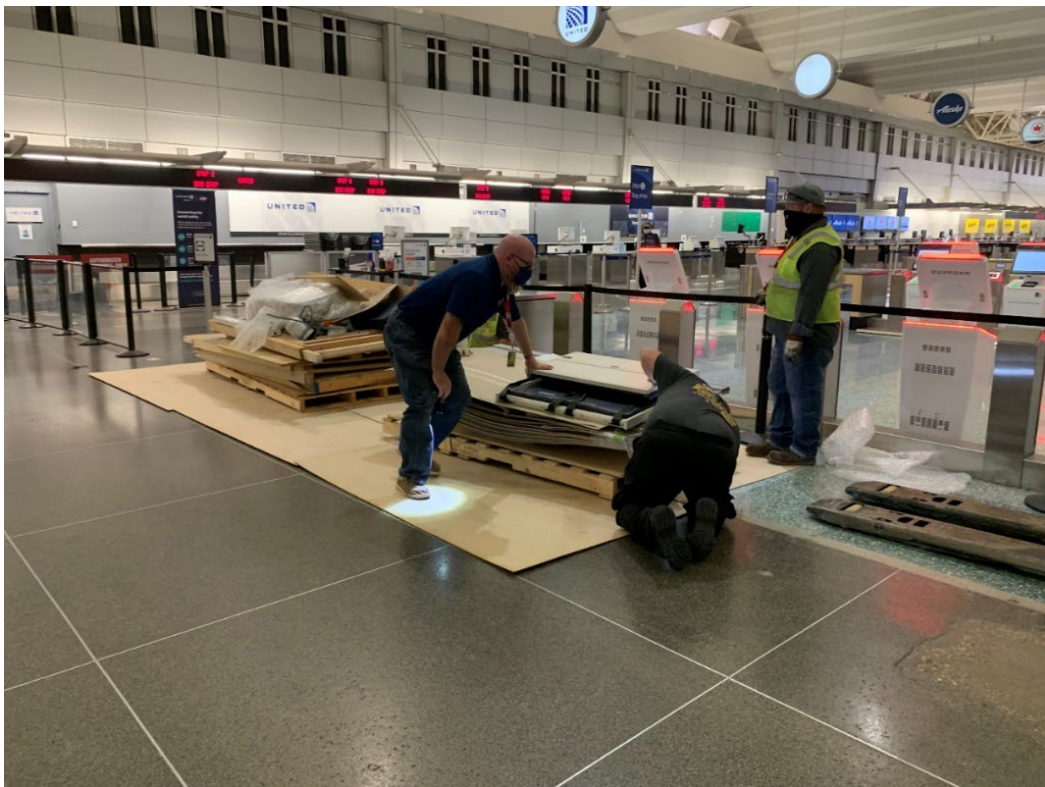
Airports should proactively plan for this type of project, if possible:

- Identify a person who will advocate for/own the project.
- Facilitate discussions with airport partners to determine what groups/organizations have a need for this type of facility and will support its completion.
- Be proactive and reach out to airline partners. Get on their radar as an airport interested in obtaining a mock cabin.
- Identify/negotiate a space where the cabin can be set up, ideally an easily accessible and access-controlled location.
- Make it a priority. Assign a budget and resources and place it on a schedule.
- Plan for ongoing programming of the facility, including scheduling activities, maintenance, and creating use guidelines.
- Include your marketing/communications team in the project so they can promote the facility locally and nationally.

## PICTURES

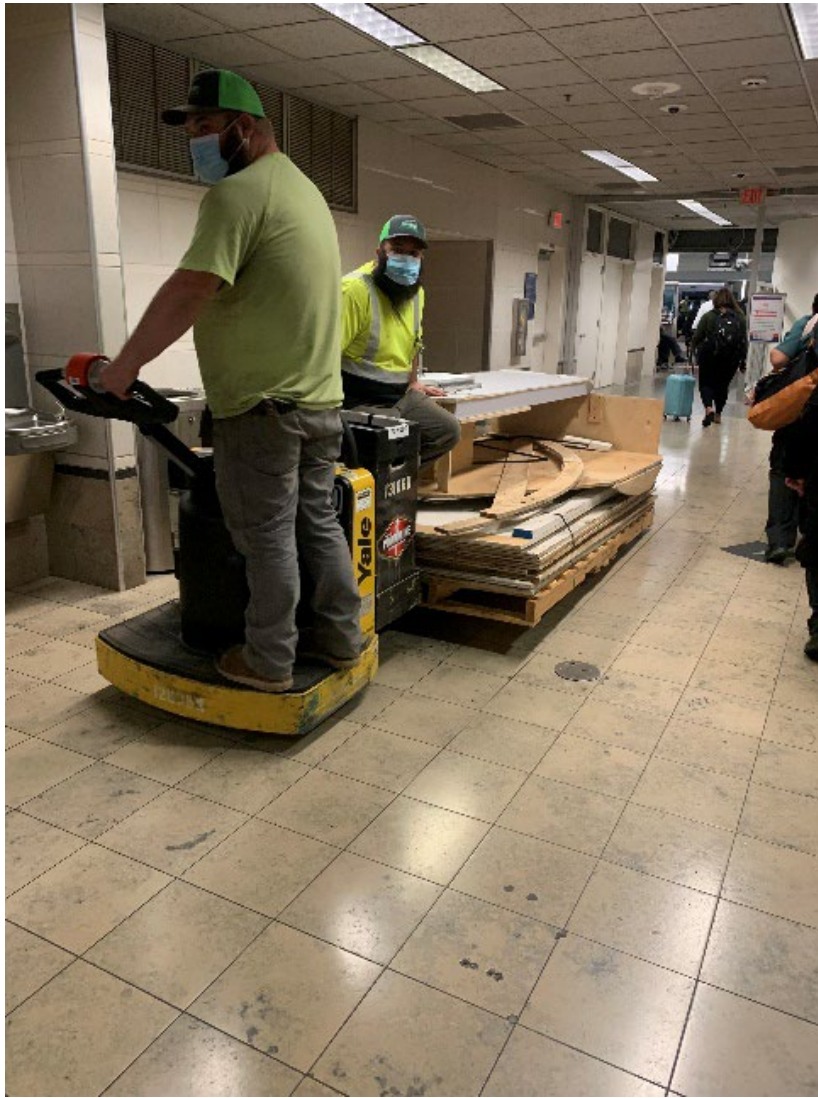


Arriving at MSP Airport



Preparing to move the parts into the secure area





Using pallet jacks to move the parts

The following images show the different stages of the mock cabin reassemble







The following images show the exterior and interior of the new mock cabin



## APPENDIX

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<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/first-airport-mock-airline-cabin-help-fliers-disabilities-minneapolis-rcna34722>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-airports-can-make-travel-more-accessible-for-flyers-with-disabilities>

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