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Denver Stapleton International Airport March 1980

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Prepared through joint effort of Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration

1. Report No.	2. Government Acces	tion No.	3. Recipient's Catalog I	ocumentation Page
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			8. Performing Organizat	ion Report No.
7. Author(s)			117 19	
			12/10	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address			10. Work Unit No (TRA	(5)
Denver Airport Improvemen FAA Regional Planning Sta	ff ARM=4	PK	11. Contract or Grant No	<u> </u>
10455 East 25th Avenue	ii, PM. 4	_/	11. Contract of Grant No	.
Aurora, Colorado 80010			13. Type of Report and	wood-Covered
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address		(3)	. / //	- A
U.S. Department of Transp			1. 1.	2. 1 l
Federal Aviation Administ			- 1/ ·	1070
Program Management Staff,	ATF-4		14. Sponsoring Agenty	ode
Washington, D.C. 20591			L	
15. Supplementary Notes	1 6	.1		
Supporting documentation			ce Delay Study,	
Denver Stapleton Internat	ional Airport,	volume 11.		
16. Abstract				
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Preface

This study of air traffic delay at Stapleton International Airport, its causes, and potential solutions, has identified a comprehensive program of delay reduction measures which, if implemented, has the potential to dramatically reduce the level and costs of delay. The potential cost savings outlined are not intended to represent absolutes but rather to point out the most productive directions in which to focus action.

The study was conducted from 1976 through 1980 by a Task Force composed of representatives of the Federal Aviation Administration, the airlines serving Stapleton, the Air Transport Association and the City of Denver's Department of Aviation. The FAA provided the support of its Washington technical organization and consultant support from Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.

The study has resulted in 14 specific recommendations for improvements for Stapleton International Airport. Task Force members plan to continue to meet as necessary to assist in the implementation of these recommendations and to provide a forum for the identification and assessment of further improvements.

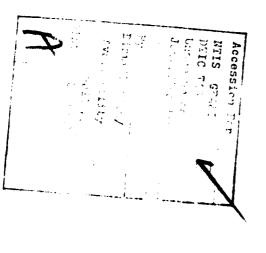


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Introduction

Background

In recent years, runway capacity has steadily declined at the nation's airports. Noise restrictions and wake vortex separation standards, when coupled with increases in aviation demand, have resulted in significant increases in delay and delay-related fuel consumption.

The development of new metropolitan airports to augment system capacity and reduce delay is difficult and costly, as is the incremental expansion of existing facilities. It has become clear that to continue providing satisfactory air transportation service, the aviation industry must concentrate on achieving the highest efficiency of the existing airport system. To accomplish this and to identify future requirements in practical terms, quantitative performance data for major airports are needed. Such data would permit wise management decisions on (1) optimum airport use strategies; (2) expenditures for runways and other facilities and equipment; and (3) research and development priorities.

The establishment of a local Task Force was an outgrowth of Federal Aviation Administra-

substantially. combined effect would be to reduce delay coordinated series of further actions whose anticipated that recommendations developed or further study at eight major airports. It was tify development options for implementation tion plan to reduce airport delays and to idenwith the primary purpose of developing an acsons directly involved in the operation and use of the airports. Therefore, in late 1974, dividual management decisions by each par-ticipating group. The net result of these joint recommendations was envisioned to be a jointly would form a basis of support for inthe FAA established an ad hoc working group the findings should be evaluated by the per major airports; however, it was decided that tional problems at eight of the country's siderable insights to capacity-related operareport on airport capacity furnished conthe nation's major airports. A 1974 FAA (ATA) concern about capacity and delay at ion (FAA) and Air Transport Association

Aircraft delays at Denver Stapleton International Airport have grown significantly over the past few years (13,900 hours in 1978). The Task Force formed to study congestion and delay at Stapleton included representatives of the Airport management, the Federal Aviation Administration, air carrier and general aviation interests, and the Air Transport Association.

Complementary studies are under way to prepare (1) an overall master plan outlining specific development needs on the Airport if it is to stay in operation through the 2000, and (2) a feasibility and site selection study for a new metropolitan airport to serve Denver in the future, with transfer of operations to the new airport potentially taking place between 1990 and the year 2000.

The objectives, scope and methodology of the

1

Task Force study are summarized below. The key recommendations of the supporting technical studies are presented on the pages that follow.

Objectives

Considering Stapleton International Airport's escalating delays and their cost implications, the Task Force agreed on four objectives to guide the analysis of current and future operations. These objectives were:

- To estimate current levels of Airport capacity and aircraft delay and to identify causes of delay associated with operations in the airspace, airfield, and apron/gate systems.
- ing aircraft delay through alternative air traffic control procedures, Airport use policies, and facility developments.
- To estimate current and future relationships between air traffic demand and aircraft delay as an aid for future planning.
- To estimate the potential benefits of increased Airport capacity and reduced aircraft delay of proposed improvements in air traffic control systems resulting from the FAA Engineering and Development program.

Scope

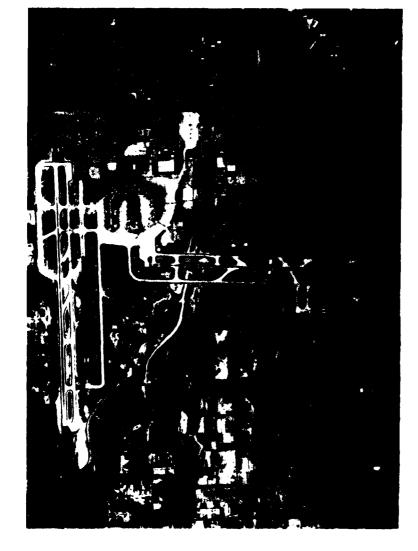
The analyses in this study focused on means of increasing the operating efficiency of the Airport and reducing aircraft delay through changes in air traffic control procedures,

changes in Airport use policies, and (to a limited degree) potential airport development actions. Landside elements (such as the passenger terminal, concourse, and ground transportation access) were not examined because they are being addressed in the Airport master plan.

Environmental concerns were recognized in developing recommendations, but they were not within the scope of the Task Force study and are not addressed in this report.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a simulation model that reflects observed system operations. After the model was validated against real-world data on demand and delay, it was used to quantify the benefits of the delay reduction options identified by the Task Force. The data resulting from model experiments were then compared with data from control or baseline experiments, and the potential reductions in delay were assessed.



Recommended Improvements

The Task Force reviewed many different potential improvements in three general areas:

- Air traffic procedures
- Airport use policy
- Facility development

The review of these potential improvements—including the quantification of benefits, operational aspects, etc.—resulted in the selection of 14 specific recommended improvements. Brief descriptions of the improvements and estimates of their potential annual savings are shown in Exhibit 1. Details on the individual recommended improvements are given on subsequent pages.

Air Traffic Procedures

A1. Optimize Runway Preferential
Use—Possible Savings, \$1,000,000*
The most prevalent runway use in recent times has been for arrivals to use Runways 26L and 26R—with peak general aviation demand partially accommodated on Runway 25—and for departures to use Runway 35L and 35R. Although this configuration provides high capacity for short periods, it cannot sustain high demand levels because of

way 8R, and small general aviation aircrai. are achieved. By using Runways 17, 17R for 8L for arrivals and Runways 8L/R, and 7 for arrival streams during Visual Flight Rule way spacing. During periods of high arrival manent designation of Taxiway 01 as Runway can depart on Runway 7—assuming the perhigh-performance aircraft can depart on Run-Runway 8L for low-performance aircraft, fur-ther efficiency is achieved. Turbojet and other arrivals of high-performance aircraft and departures, triple VFR arrivals and departures demand, the delay reduction benefits of triple (VFR) weather conditions are significant. Through the use of Runways 17L, 17R, and associated taxiway congestion and close run-150 to 160 operations per hour. 1, 25. This configuration has a capacity of

A2. Provide Converging II.S Approaches— Possible Savings \$1,500,000 There is a need for dual approach streams

There is a need for dual approach streams when weather conditions are technically VFR, but not suitable for visual approaches. Dual approach streams can be achieved through Instrument Landing System (ILS) approaches to Runways 8L, 8R and 17L, 17R with savings of more than \$1,000,000 per year. If innovative procedures for missed approaches can be developed, it appears that this procedure could be used in actual Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) conditions with total savings up to \$1,500,000 or more.

A3. Minimize Constraints on Departure Airspace Procedures—Possible Savings, \$1,900,000

The Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center requires departures using the same airway to be separated by a minimum of 5-miles-in-trail when they are handed off to the Center. To achieve this, departures must be delayed at takeoff. Several options are possible to reduce

negative factor in delaying northbound turns of Runway 35 departures and extended downseparation). These options could save about I minute of delay for half of the departures in these delays: (a) providing "radar vectors to on-course;" (b) allowing an interim separation standard on handoff (compromise beestimated savings are \$400,000 per year for arrivals and \$200,000 for departures. wind patterns on arrivals from the south. The 1985 for a savings of \$1,300,000 per year. tween 3-mile terminal and 5-mile en route The prohibited airspace area P-26 also is a

Savings, \$1,500,000 A4. Refine Arrival Metering-Possible

recognized and computer programs must be modified to better motivate pilot actions by requiring tight target times to checkpoints. optimized to better reflect proper allowances for pilot refusal of landings on Runway 26R craft and pilot capabilities must be better positive control. breaking ties to parallel runways induces un-necessary delay. The metering rate must be proach streams in VFR weather. Provision for Metering systems must provide for dual ap-Metering software must be refined to allow the optimum benefit of profile descent. Airand for pop-up aircraft not under en route

Exhibit 1 Recommended Improvements

Z •	Improvement	Potential annual savings	ual savings
Air T	raffic Procedures		
<u>></u>	Al Optimize runway preferential use	\$1 million	
A 2	Provide converging ILS approaches	\$1 5 million	
	Runways 17L or 17R and 8L or 8R	\$1.5 million	
A3	Minimize departure constraints	\$1.9 million	
A 4	Refine arrival metering	\$1.5 million	
A 5	Implement FAD* procedures	31 million	
A	Provide independent If K parallel approaches to Runways 17L/17R and		
	35L/33K)		
Airpo	Airport Use Policy	<u>}</u>	
B 1	Encourage use of satellite airports by low-performance aircraft	\$5 million	
B 2	Control hourly demand (depeaking or		
B 3	quotas) Schedule airfield maintenance to avoid		
	peak periods		

- C Facility Development
 C1 Construct addi Relieve bottleneck on south ramp (by threshold of Runway 8L) pendent IFR approaches) Construct additional runway (inde-
- \mathfrak{C} Provide holding areas (avoid blocking

\$150,000 \$10 million

- 2 Provide additional ground control fre-(axıways
- Surface Detection Equipment, televi-Improve runway surveillance (Airport quencies
- Ssion, or new radar)

m. 1

^{*} Cost savings of the recommended improvements are not additive. Some recommended improvements attack the same problem area in a different way. Therefore, improvements must be judged in terms of overall costs and benefits. Costs are estimated on the basis of an average aircraft operating cost of \$20 per minute. Therefore, a typical estimate would be as follows: When one minute of average delay can be eliminated for 250,000 aircraft operations, the savings will equal \$20 multiplied by one minute multiplied by 250,000 or \$5,000,000. Recent increases in aircraft operating costs make these values

FAD Fuel Advisory Departure

A5. Implement FAD Procedures—

Possible Savings, \$1,000,000
When delay levels are high, or are expected to be high, aircraft should be issued expected alternative destinations. decisions to minimize fuel use and/or use runway arrival times prior to departing for Denver to allow maximum pilot discretion in

70% of the Cost of a New Runway Approaches-Possible Savings, About A6. Provide Independent IFR Parallel

angles, maximum localizer divergence, etc., If changes in procedures and policies are possible, taking full advantage of runway could be avoided. the massive capital cost of a new runway threshold offsets, differential glide slope

Airport Use Policy

B1. Encourage Use of Satellite Airports—

can relocate to outlying airports will probably do so, and those who have a prime need to crease-especially if private aircraft are from the Airport-those aircraft owners who charged costs that reflect their relative benefit necessary to optimize Airport capability. As Airport complexity, delays, and costs in-Segregation of low-performance aircraft is make connections with airline aircraft will Possible Savings, \$3,000,000

If some combination of actions were taken which would reduce the impact of general aviation at Stapleton by 50%, savings would be about \$3,000,000 per year.

B2. Control Hourly Demand

Future hourly demand must be controlled and

pediting related actions demand that these opexploration and the Airport's role in exsystems context recognizing economic and social impacts. National priorities for energy significantly but must be developed in a total Such policy options can reduce delay operators to reduce peak hour schedules. to induce alternative actions by aircraft day; and (c) limitations on terminal capacity scheduled flights more evenly throughout the quotas imposed by the airport sponsor and weather. Several options are possible: (a) maintained below the airfield capacity in VFR \$10,000,000 a year.) would reduce delay costs by approximately the sensitivity of demand to delay in 1990, a tions be approached with caution. (Illustrating the FAA; (b) airline cooperation to spread 10% reduction in air carrier movements

speed of construction (e.g., Portland cement versus flexible asphaltic pavement). Where critical attention must be given not only to scheduled during periods of low demand-in the scheduling of construction to provide for most cases, at night. As congestion increases, **B3.** Schedule Airfield Maintenance Maintenance, except for emergencies, must be \$1,000,000 per month. to balancing the choice of materials with the The cost of closing Runways 8R, 26L during ings might be a matter of negotiation between the Airport sponsor and concerned airlines. have a significant delay effect, potential savmaterial choices and construction scheduling maximum compression of the work, but also 1978 was estimated to range from \$750,000 to

Facility Development Options

C1. Construct Additional Runway -- Possible Savings, Over \$10,000,000 Per Year After 1990

stage, can provide worthwhile reductions in commuter, Convair 580s, etc.), as a first to slower, low-performance aircraft (air taxi, short-term needs, a shorter runway dedicated most critical need for 1990 and beyond. For mand builds during all weather conditions, the need for triple independent VFR operations becomes more critical. The capability to handle large numbers of heavy aircraft is the parallel runway system with adequate separaproaches, the advent of high percentages of trol procedures can enable dual IFR aption for wake vortex protection. As future de heavy aircraft in the future demands a Even if short-term changes in air traffic con-

Possible Savings, \$150,000 C2. Relieve Bottleneck on South Ramp-

may not be possible without major reloca-By constructing taxiways to bypass the west ends of runways and by expanding and/or tions. Some improvements can be realized by more use of high-speed exits. tleneck can be relieved. Major improvement relocating existing taxiways, the present bot-

C3. Provide Holding Areas

mand, the gate capacity of the Airport is exceeded. As a result, the line-up of aircraft elimination of occasional back-up on active severe periods of congestion, onto the active runways themselves. The construction of holding areas, or "penalty boxes" would proreduction in controller workload and the vide some relief. The benefits would be a backs up onto the active taxiway and, during At present, during certain times of high de-

C4. Provide Additional Ground Control
At present, during several times of the day,

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come for additional frequencies devoted to craft wanting to request clearance to taxi, etc. ground control. proach and departure control, the time has Following the lead of dual frequencies for apfrequency congestion and delay for the airmunicate with ground control results in severe pressure of too many pilots trying to com-

C5. Improve Runway Surveillance

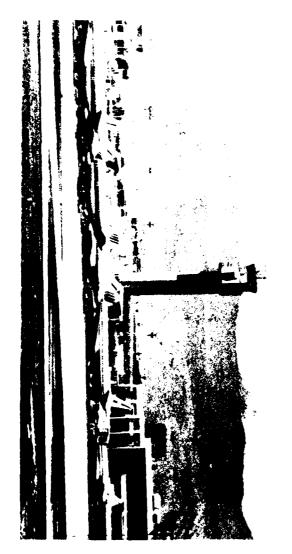
entire Airport at night. Possible options: Aircirculation benefits would accrue to the the of improved surveillance would be to assure periods of snow, rain, and fog, and during extremely hot weather when visual refraction 35L, 35R are so far that aircraft position canport Surface Detection Equipment (ASDE), when operations are to the north. Additional that runways are clear of arriving aircraft from heat reduces visibility. The main benefit Distances to the northern ends of Runway not be accurately determined from the tower. elevision, new tower. This condition becomes more critical during

Note: Physical Improvements in Place

airfield. Now under way, but not yet completed, are: (1) a localizer for Runway 8R; (2) extension of Taxiway D-3 from Taxiway D to porary designation of Taxiway 01 as Runway exit taxiways from Runway 35R; (5) temwith Runway 26L; (4) added fillets for several assessed during the first (capacity) phase of VORTAC* to the northwest quadrant of the new exit Taxiway C-9 for Runway 8R; (3) a dicator, and runway end identifier lights; (2) a These are: (1) for Runway 17L an instrument A number of physical improvements that were Taxiway Z; (3) the addition of a new highlarge fillet for Taxiway D at its intersection landing system, visual approach slope in-7, 25; and (6) relocation of the Denver this study have already been implemented.

> speed exit for Runway 17L; (4) a holding apron (penalty box) adjacent to the passenger terminal apron; (5) the extension of Taxiway D westward to the Concourse A apron; and craft basing capacity at Jefferson County and Arapahoe County Airports. (6) physical improvements to expand the air-

VORTAC = colocated very high frequency omnidirectional radio range and tactical air navigation equipment



Summary of Technical Studies

The operation of the existing airfield and the potential benefits of the improvements were assessed in terms of airfield capacity, airfield demand, and average aircraft delays.

Estimates of average aircraft delays are based on the values—and the interrelationships—of airfield capacity and demand. The estimated average aircraft delays permit assessment of both the operational feasibility of the airfield and the potential economic benefits of improvements.

delays are maintained within acceptable each of the various improvements indicates delay savings. Thus, a comparison of the provement can be weighed against its annual operations can increase airfield capacity and plemented in stages so that airfield capacity is increased as needed and average aircraft bination of airfield improvements can be imwhich are the most effective. For a given costs and the delay reduction associated with delay, the cost of a particular airfield imcedures to changes in physical facilities and ing from changes in air traffic control proforecast increase in demand, a suitable comtached to each minute of average aircraft Various airfield system improvements, rang thus reduce delays. If a dollar value is at-

The following paragraphs summarize the technical studies. First, present-day operations at the Airport are briefly described. Then, estimates of present and projected airfield demand, airfield capacity, and average aircraft delay are presented. Next, the airfield capacity increases and the aircraft delay reductions associated with the recommended improvements are illustrated. Finally, the

Exhibit 2 Airfield Operations

Weather	Visibility / ceiling	Percentage occurrence
VFRI	Better than 3 miles / 2,100 feet	90.0%
VFR2	Less than 3 miles/2,100 feet but better than 3 miles/1,000 feet	4.6
IFR1	Between 2 miles / 800 feet and 3 miles / 1,000 feet	4
IFR2	Operating minimums	4.0

interrelationship of airfield demand, airfield capacity, and aircraft delays is examined.

Runway Configurations

Exhibit 2 illustrates the runway configurations use at the airport and presents the average percentage utilization of these configurations in different weather conditions.

Exhibit 2 Airfield Operations (continued)

Runway Use	Configuration	VFR1	Percentage use (1978 Baseline) VFR2 IFR1	1978 Baseline) IFR1	IFR2	Total all weather
President (Control of Control of	: = 	49.1%	3.1%	0.9%	2.9%	56.0%
2		1.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	1.7
ω	=	31.3	1.0	0.2	0.5	33.0
4		2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
V.	= =	2.7	0.3	0.2	0.2	3.4
6	==	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	33 80
7		0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total		90.0%	4.6%	1.40%	A 00%	100.0%

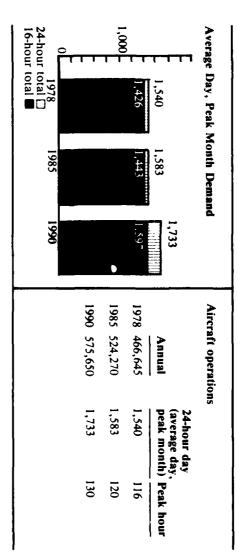
Arrival Departure

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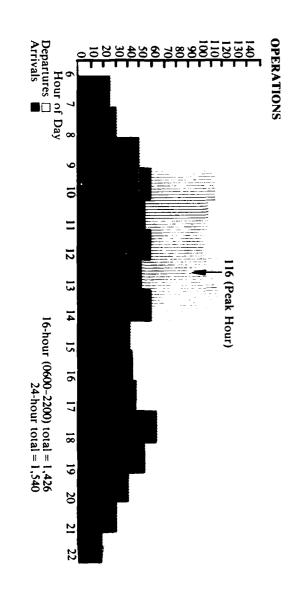
Airfield Demand

Exhibit 3 illustrates projected increases in annual demand from 466,645 aircraft operations (landings and takeoffs) in 1978 to 575,650 in 1990, and corresponding increases in daily peak hour traffic.

Exhibit 3 Airfield Demand Levels



Hourly Variation of 1978 Demand (Average Day, Peak Month)



Airfield Capacity

can be processed in a given time under Airfield capacity is the maximum number of aircraft operations (landings or takeoffs) that specific conditions of:

- Aurspace constraints
- Ceiling and visibility conditions
- Runway layout and use
- Aircraft mix (types of aircraft)
- Percent arrivals

hourly basis. Airfield capacity is normally expressed on an

capacity at Stapleton, including: Many factors limit airfield and airspace

- Weather, wind, and visibility limitations approaches to parallel runways are not Proximity of parallel runway sets (ILS changes in runway use and often limit (Weather anomalies cause frequent independent,
- and 40% in the year 2000) aircraft (Heavy aircraft mix: 8% in 1978, projected to 12% in 1985, 16% in 1990, approach to one direction)
 Wake turbulence and the mix of heavy
- (Aircraft must be spaced 5 miles apart when Air Route Traffic Control Center assumes control. This requirement causes Requirement for en route separation takeoff delays)
- creased on hot days) Hot weather and high altitude effects (Departures on Runways 17L, 35R are in-
- Pilot preference for Runway 8L, 26R
- Metering inefficiency
- Airfield maintenance and construction
- Lack of aircraft holding area
- Runway and apron congestion Restricted Airspace Area P-26
- Placement of general aviation areas
- Effect of Stapleton operations on neighboring airports

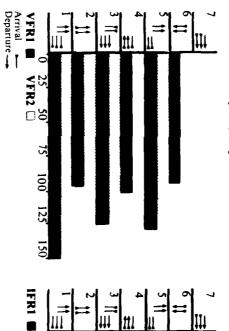
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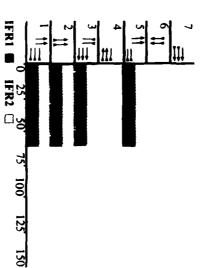
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ditions defined in Exhibit 3. for the runway configuration and weather con-Exhibit 4 shows estimates of airfield capacity

Exhibit 4 Airfield Capacity

1978 Baseline Capacity (Operations Per Hour)





Airfield Delays

caused by airfield congestion, taken by an aircraft to move from point A to point B. Computing average annual airfield delays involves: Airfield delay is the additional travel time,

- Airfield physical characteristics
 Air traffic control procedures
- Aircraft operational characteristics
- Weather Airfield demand

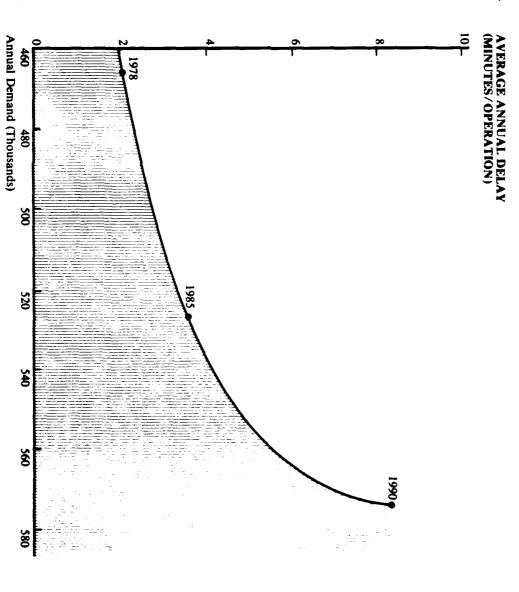
minutes per aircraft operation. Average annual delays are expressed in

changes in air traffic control procedures are aircraft operations at an airport approaches airfield capacity. Aircraft delays during conprevail at Stapleton International Airport by 1990 unless airfield improvements and/or also high. High levels of congestion will gested periods are very high; and conseimplemented to increase its capacity. quently the average aircraft annual delays are Congestion results whenever the volume of

savings of \$20 million or more could be Exhibit 5 illustrates the increases in average annual delay that are estimated to occur in delays would be significantly less than those identified in Exhibit 5, and annual delay cost the future if no improvements are im-Exhibit 1 are implemented, average annual plemented.* If the improvements identified in

1

Exhibit 5 Estimated Annual Delay 1977-1990 (Do Nothing Situation)



Note that average annual delays are estimated to be just under 4 minutes per aircraft in 1985. Corresponding peak hour delays would be much higher, ranging up to 15 minutes in VFR and 60 minutes in IFR.

Estimated Delay Savings

Far-term systems (1990)	improvement Near-term systems (1985)
2.8	Minutes per aircraft 0.5
1,612,000	Minutes per year 262,000
\$32,200,000	Costs per year at \$20 / minute \$ 5,200,000

Impact of FAA Engineering and Development Programs

The Task Force also attempted to estimate the potential delay savings associated with FAA Engineering & Development (E&D) programs.

For purposes of analysis, the impact of the programs was identified by the FAA as being "near term" and "far term" according to the estimated time of availability. The "near term" programs were assumed to be operational at Stapleton in 1985; the "far term" in 1990.

which today ranges from 1 to 2 minutes, was the near-term and to 3nm in the far-term. The craft, was reduced from 6nm today to 4nm in a small aircrast operating behind a heavy airminimum arrival/arrival separation, e.g., for rival/arrival separations were reduced from 3 cordingly, the standard minimum IFR ar-For study purposes, the Task Force used the air traffic control operating parameters of not changed in the near-term but was reduced minimum departure departure separation, nautical miles (nm) today and in the near-Relating to Airport Capacity/Delay" term, to 2nm in the far-term. The largest (FAA-EM-78-8A), dated June 1978. Acthese programs as given in the FAA report, 'Parameters of Future ATC Systems

to 1 minute for all departure combinations in the far-term.

The evaluation is based on output from a computer model which produced average annual delay in minutes per aircraft movement in 1985 and 1990. Two cases were studied: (1) a base case with no improvements, and (2) a

case in which the E&D systems were operating and wake vortices were assumed absent all year.

In view of these results, the Task Force strongly supports the expeditious development of these systems.



Action Plan

Z	No. Improvement	Time frame Short- In range rai	Time frame Short- Intermediate range range	Lend agency FAA Airli	Airlines	Ş
> >	Air Traffic Procedures Al Optimize runway preferential use	•		•		•
A2	Provide converging ILS approaches	•	•	•		
>3	Minimize constraints on departure airspace procedures	•		•		
*	Refine arrival metering	•	•	•		
> 5	Issue expected arrival times		•	•		
>	Provide independent IFR parallel approaches (Instrument Landing System to Runways 17L/17R and 35L/35R)	•		•		

Action Plan (Continued)

Z

		Time frame	3	Lead agency	gency	
Ž	Improvement	Tange	range	FAA	Airlines	City
Bi j	rport Use Policy Elecourage use of satellite airports by low-performance aircraft		•	•	•	•
B 2	Control hourly demand (depeaking or quotas)	•		•	• •	•
83	Schedule airfield maintenance to avoid peak periods	•				•
C]	Facility Develops nent C1 Construct additional runway (independent IFR approaches)		•			•
S	Relieve bottleneck on south ramp (by threshold of Runway 8L)	•	•			•
\mathfrak{S}	Provide holding areas (avoid blocking taxiways)	•				•
2	Provide additional ground control frequencies	•		•		
\mathfrak{C}	Improve runway surveillance (Airport Surface Detection Equipment, television, or new radar)		•	•		

DATE ILMED