

INFORMING
COMMUNITY
DISCUSSION
OF OUR
AIRPORT'S
FUTURE



Photo by Pete McBride

Every day hundreds of planes take off or land at the Aspen Airport, 99% in opposite directions. ASE is known as one of the most dangerous airports in the country.

Since mid-December, Aspen Fly Right has published five advertisements and four detailed essays on Aspen Airport. We're stimulating a robust community conversation about a better Airport to sustain Aspen's character and values.

Aspen Fly Right is a group of concerned local citizens and experts deeply engaged with Airport issues. An independent nonprofit organization of volunteers, we're solidly committed to science, education, and public benefit. In parallel with the important work of the Airport Advisory Board and its Safety Task Force, we offer thoughtful, in-depth analysis and support respectful community discussion. We focus on proposed redesign to allow bigger airplanes—the "airside" where the planes operate—far more than the "landside" zone of terminal, parking, and roads.

The four topics we've analyzed so far reveal:

Have a safe flight: All agree safety is the top priority for Aspen Airport, said to be the most dangerous in the US, and the only one flying both ways simultaneously. All 124 past accidents that killed 120 people involved private (non-airline) planes. Most involved pilot error. Why? Private pilots aren't required to train for Aspen's unique and unforgiving conditions. Most don't—but should. And planes holding far more people than our hospitals could handle would add unmanageable risk.

Big public decisions on private aviation: At least two-thirds of annual visitors arrive via Aspen Airport, but only about a sixth of its flights use the SkyWest-operated airline planes at the public terminal. The other five-sixths are General Aviation—private planes using the separate Fixed Base Operation. The FBO's 30-year contract will expire in September and is being re-bid. Now a private monopoly, it sells jet fuel at high profits that may be twice the Airport's entire budget, but the County gets just 1%. This model could earn a private monopolist \$1+ billion in the next 30 years. The County should consider competition, or a County-owned and County- or contractor-run FBO, to better serve the public interest.

The airlines' planes aren't vanishing: The claimed need for airside redesign rests on a decade-old myth that the airlines' current fleet of SkyWest CRJ700 regional jets will retire in the next 2–7 years. The County's top aviation technical consultant expects they'll fly for another 20–30 years. Two excellent but excluded backup options also offer reliable insurance. Rebuilding the airside for bigger planes because today's are about to retire and the only alternatives are bigger would be a nine-figure bet on a fallacy—and risk adding dirtier, noisier planes like private 737s.

Clean quiet planes in this decade: The aviation revolution, assumed far off, is now upon us. A plane eight times as efficient as a standard business jet was shown in 2020. Its technology can scale to at least regional-jet size in this decade. Many electric and hydrogen planes, some bigger and longer-range than today's airline fleet, are also expected then. They could serve Aspen without the proposed new airside, before it could be built. Superclean, ultraquiet planes can serve Aspen by 2030, saving a \$200+ million rebuild.

Aspen Fly Right's lively 9 January public discussion at Explore Booksellers is on GrassRootsTV and posted to our website. Further publications and public events will enlarge new Aspen Airport solutions.

Many citizens have joined our growing coalition. Please visit aspenflyright.org, read our analyses there, tell your friends and neighbors, and endorse and support our work.

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← See essay

Paid for by Aspen Fly Right

Exploring new solutions
for a safer, cleaner, quieter,
and better Aspen Airport.