

**THE FAA
IS MAKING US
AN OFFER
WE CAN
REFUSE...
AND SHOULD**



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 challenging airports in the country.

What the public is being told and what the evidence shows

The public is being told the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires Aspen Airport to accept bigger planes, raising Pitkin County's unusual 95' wingspan limit to the standard 118'.

No; evidence shows and the FAA confirms that's entirely the County's choice. If the County doesn't demand bigger wingspans than 95', it can keep its 95' limit, and the existing airside built for those planes can safely remain as is.

The FAA requires “critical safety improvements” to eliminate the 1999 exception.

Only if the County wants to let in bigger planes that need more space to pass each other on the ground—not if it doesn't. The County's 26 January 2023 “Frequently Asked Questions” says a dozen times that raising the runway/taxiway separation from 320' to 400' is an FAA safety requirement, but every time, it omits the punchline “...if we want to bring in bigger planes.”

The FAA has long wanted to remove Aspen's 1999 exception, and signaled that wish in 2013.

True. The FAA likes national standards and dislikes local exceptions. But this exception is justified by specific local constraints and costs. Bigger planes weren't the FAA's initiative: the County has sought them for far longer.

Without Aspen's upgrade for bigger, heavier planes, the FAA may stop its discretionary grants to the Airport.

The FAA's John Bauer did tell the Commissioners that on 11 April 2023, and even said funding for the passenger terminal would depend on prior or concurrent airside upgrades—not doing the urgent terminal work first as Commissioners want. However, the FAA's \$2+-million-a-year entitlement grants would continue. So would other airport revenues tenfold larger. The Airport wouldn't need to fund the \$200+ million airside rebuild if it didn't insist on bigger planes. And not having to relocate many other elements could slash additional investment needs.

Aspen can't maintain a modern airport without FAA discretionary grants.

Of course we can: the County's online 2023 budget shows only \$6.8 million in all Federal grants out of a \$26.9-million airport total. The Commissioners also have a crucial opportunity in the next few weeks to offset any lost discretionary grants by retaking control of the private-aviation Fixed Base Operation. That could keep \$15+ million of annual earnings reinvested in the airport rather than supporting Atlantic's private-equity-fund owner.

What You Can Do

Please attend the Aspen Fly Right third public town hall meeting on Monday 8 May from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at the Pitkin County Library in Aspen to join a robust community discussion about bringing in bigger planes, informed by important new material we'll briefly present.

On 11 May, when the Airport is closed for maintenance, Aspen Airport Staff and the Airport Advisory Board are hosting an **open house** in the terminal's Departures Area from 12:00 to 2:00 and 4:30 to 6:30. **We encourage you to attend, ask your questions, and express your concerns.**



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



← Documented analyses supporting this ad (and 13 more) are posted here.

See website for new analysis on “Fact-checking claims—over half are false.”

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