

Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)

November 19, 2024
7 – 8:30 PM

Montgomery County Upper County Community Center
8201 Emory Grove Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877



Attendees:

Members:

Bobbi Besley
Justin Bollum, non-voting
H Michael Brown
Councilmember Luedtke Aide Aaron Kraut, non-voting
William “Skip” Reindollar
Ruben Rosario, non-voting
Lynne Stein Benzion
Dale Tuttle

MCDOT Staff Liaison:

Joe Pospisil

Guests:

Mollie Hilty
Jeannie Bayer
Rebecca Trupp
Marcela Aquilar
Barbara Fischer
Lorraine Lennon
Catherine Wallenmeyer
Nancy Shenk

Action Items

October 15th Meeting Minutes Approval

No modifications were proposed by committee members to the October 15th meeting minutes. Minutes were approved unanimously by the committee and posted on the [ACAC Webpage](#).

Reports and Announcements

Follow Up on Data Subcommittee

The data subcommittee gave a presentation providing updates on their efforts to obtain data from the FAA and a meeting with the flight data vendor. Included was also operational information from airports in the region to provide a comparison to the Airpark.

Several requests have been made of the FAA to provide noise complaint data for the Airpark with no response. The committee discussed the possibility of making a formal Freedom of Information Act (FIOA) request through either the County Council or the County Executive's Office. There was also contemplation as to whether the County should engage Congressman Jamie Raskin and Senator Chris Van Hollen's offices as this may help garner a response from the FAA.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

The ACAC recommends the County Council or County Executive make a formal request of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for FAA noise complaint data relevant to the Montgomery County Airpark flight path area. The time period for data should be from January 1, 2019 through November 30, 2024.

This motion was unanimously approved.

The subcommittee was able to meet with the flight data vendor, Flight Aware, at the beginning of November. The vendor stated they are likely missing touch and go operations based on their methodology and data filtering rules. The subcommittee concluded that the "Pattern Operations" data provided by Flight Aware for the Airpark website more accurately reflected touch and go operations. The vendor believed it may be possible to more accurately capture touch and go operations with current data; however, they were unsure of what this may involve and if this would come at additional cost.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

The ACAC requests that the MCRA inquires its vendor, Flight Aware, modify their filtering rules so flight data they provide will more accurately capture touch and go operations and distinguish them from pattern operations.

This motion was unanimously approved.

The committee discussion turned to the availability of safety related data. The subcommittee emphasized that there are many sources for aviation data related to safety. Some of these sources are available online to anyone, such as the Aviation Safety Reporting System [Database](#). However, much of the data is held by the FAA and requires a FIOA request, which may come at a cost to the County. Beyond obtaining general aviation safety data, the committee was particularly interested in violations and actions documented for the four flight schools that operate out of the Airpark.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

The ACAC recommends the County Council or County Executive make a formal request of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for information on safety and maintenance violations and/or actions and aviation related incidents at the Montgomery County Airpark including FAA Part 141 Flight Schools. The time period is since January 1, 2004.

This motion was unanimously approved.

Unfinished Business

A date needed to be selected for the ACAC meeting dedicated to collecting community input. It was determined that this date would need to be early in the 2025 calendar year so information gathered could be incorporated into the annual report due June 2025. Concern was raised about the third Tuesday of January, which is when the ACAC has decided to hold its meetings. Monday January 20 is both a federal holiday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and the Presidential Inauguration. The committee discussed whether a portion of the meeting should be allocated to discussing committee business or another meeting should be held in January. It was ultimately decided to hold the one meeting in January and this meeting would be devoted entirely to community input.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

On January, 29 2025 the Airpark Community Advisory Committee will hold a meeting dedicated to collecting input from members of the community. The meeting will be held from 7 to 9 pm* at the Upper County Community Center. A virtual option will be available through Microsoft Teams. Residents will have an opportunity to sign up to speak or provide written testimony to the committee.

This motion was unanimously approved.

* The Upper County Community Recreation Center's closing time is 9 pm.

New Business

Community Impact

Due to time constraints, discussion of the slides the subcommittee prepared for a comparison between the Airpark and regional airports was compressed. One issue that was discussed was the inability to find updates on activity in the Airpark, such as the status of possible facility improvements. As an example, a subcommittee member noted that the Easton, MD Airport provides monthly updates on its webpage. Another committee member remarked many of these regional airports had made more improvements to their facilities compared to the Airpark. The quality of the Airpark facilities could play a role in what businesses it attracts, such as flight schools. With certain improvements the Airpark may be able to attract more desirable businesses.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

Establish a community and facilities subcommittee with the purpose of engaging the Airpark business community (only those businesses on the Airpark property) and reviewing Airpark facility plans, proposals and project.

After this motion was unanimously approved, a call for volunteers was made. Committee members Dale Tuttle, Skip Reindollar, Lynne Stein Benzion and Justin Bollum all volunteered to be a part of this subcommittee.

The committee discussed ways to engage the broader community. One idea was to create a flyer for each meeting that can be distributed by committee members and community members. The County liaison would work on this flyer with a goal of distributing it 2 weeks ahead of each meeting. The idea of creating a survey was also briefly discussed. However, the committee decided that a decision on this should wait until after the community meeting in January. Additionally, developing a survey could be a recommendation in their report to the County Council and County Executive.

Community Input/Feedback

Five members of the community provided in-person testimony at the end of the meeting. These residents were Nancy Shenk, Catherine Wallenmeyer, Mollie Hilty, Rebecca Trupp, and Barbara Fischer. Copies of the testimony provided by Ms. Shenk, Ms. Hilty and Ms. Fischer are attached.

Following a unanimous committee vote the meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm

Testimony to the Airpark Advisory Committee
November 19, 2024

Good Evening,

My name is Nancy Shenk. I have lived in the Goshen Estates community for the past 48 years. I represented my community on the original Airpark Liaison committee for 30 years, from the time of its inception until 2021 when the County Council “decided that it will no longer have a Council sponsored Airpark Liaison Committee”. This decision was made without input from the community or the Committee.

The ALC was formed as a result of outcry from the community as to the changes at the Airpark following the extension of the runway in the 1970’s . It is questionable under whose authority this took place, however following this extension, the airpark changed from a small recreational airpark to one which attracted much additional traffic to include many flight schools and small jets with minimal oversight and minimal concern for the community over which they fly.

Over the years there were many county offices that provided oversight of the airpark. The council had a task force, Park and Planning included comments on the impact of the airpark on the community and their recommendations, The Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan ,The Airpark Master Plan and Layout Plans. There were several studies completed, such as Dynacorp, Part 150 noise studies, and most recently the Vianair study.... All included community impact analysis and recommendations in regards to airpark operations and noise concerns. Many of these recommendations, particularly those which have the greatest community impact were not and have not been implemented.

Unfortunately all of the guardrails that previously provided some oversight, no longer exist. I encourage each of you to take a look at these documents...all available online...particularly the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan from 1990. This document includes general types of noise abatement actions as well as programs to be considered by the Revenue Authority. This plan **recommended against any future extension of the runway**. Interestingly this document was written prior to the residential development of North Montgomery Village ,East Montgomery Village, Hunters Woods, Flower Hill, Hadley Farms, etc etc. In addition, during the 30 years that the ALC existed, we were continually guaranteed by county officials that the runway would **NEVER be extended!!**

Which brings me to my next point.....

Recently the Revenue authority requested and has or will receive close to 2 million dollars in grant money from the FAA and MAA to expand operations at the airpark with 3 box hangars and an additional 100 x 100 ft hangar...all without environmental impact studies.

The Revenue Authority reports that traffic and tie downs at the airpark have not increased in the past many years, so why is this expansion necessary? In addition the MAA 2023 Airport Systems Report indicates that the airpark meets its facility requirement objectives for hangars with its current 70 T Hangars and 8 conventional hangars....And there is a 0% increase in operations and based aircraft increase forecasted for 2024 - 2039.

The request was recently reviewed by the ECON committee and recommended that the county move forward on this project? How is it that this committee was not been briefed on this unnecessary expansion prior to any recommendation?

An even more concerning situation came to my attention.....

The Maryland Department of Transportation – Maryland Aviation Administration (MDOT MAA) published its Aviation System Plan 2023. The purpose of this document is to evaluate the airports in the state. The Montgomery County Airpark passed all but four of the Facility Requirement Objectives with the understanding that these four items will be remediated to meet the State’s objective. In addition the airpark is out of compliance with the Master Plan. The Facility items out of compliance are.... 1. lighting on the runway, 2. the approach capability, 3. the Airpark Reference Code....and

4. The length of the runway. The report indicates that the runway needs to be extended by 798 feet, which would make the runway 5,000 ft. Obviously this is in complete opposition to the recommendations made many years ago that the runway not be extended (and this was before the majority of the residential development had not taken place) And in opposition to the “promise” made by the County to the community years ago.

There is no question that a longer runway will guarantee increased traffic and larger jet traffic. (most jets... especially corporate jets require a runway of 5,000 ft)

I am requesting that this committee ask the county executive to put a hold on ALL further expansion of the airpark (to include hangars and runway) until such time as the airport master plan can be revised, a complete environmental study to be completed to include noise and operational impact , and a public meeting (as required by the development of a master plan) to allow testimony from the community in regards to this expansion....

I am happy to further discuss these issues with you.

And, again I encourage you to take time to research this information to better understand the complexities of the Airpark and its impact on the community.

Thank you for your time.

5.4.8 Montgomery County Airpark (GAI) The last 2008 MASP identified 6 projects for GAI to undertake. Of the 6 projects 2 were completed (installing an ATCT and installing a rotating beacon) and 4 projects remain as recommended projects in the 2023 MASP. Extend primary runway length by 798 feet, to 5,000 feet Improve ARC from B-II to C-II Improve approach capability to precision approach Improve runway lighting type to HIRL* In addition to these 4 projects above, the 2023 MASP recommends 1 additional project that GAI should undertake to meet its Reliever facility, service, and equipment objectives: Perform airport Master Plan The airport's 2022 ACIP and 2013 ALP Pen & Ink Change were reviewed. Of the 4 projects recommended in the 2023 MASP, indicated with an asterisk above (*), are shown on GAI's Master Plan and ALP. Improving GAI's runway lighting type to HIRL is indicated on the ACIP, for years 2023-2024 with a cost of \$850,000 and is incorporated in the implementation plan below. It is recommended that GAI update its Master Plan to identify its airport development needs, including the need for the above projects. Implementing the above 5 projects will bring GAI to meet its Reliever facility, service, and equipment objectives. TABLE 5-8: GAI PROJECT COSTS

Project	Project Type	Short-Term (1-5 Years)	Mid-Term (6-10 Years)	Long-Term (11-20 Years)
Primary Runway Length to 5,000'		\$66,160,000		
ARC from B-II to C-II			\$184,030,000	
Approach Capability to Precision Approach		\$6,959,000		
Runway Lighting Type to HIRL(1)		\$850,000		
Master Plan		\$750,000		
Total		\$192,589,000	\$66,160,000	\$

6.3 Environmental Considerations Understanding the presence of environmental and manmade features in and around Maryland's public-use facilities is important because of its potential to impact airport development as additional planning, feasibility, and permitting activities may be required. This preliminary analysis is intended to provide a broad overview of select environmental and manmade features present at each facility to inform future planning recommendations at the system level. The features were mainly identified using data from Maryland's GIS catalog MD iMAP. The analysis is presented in Table 6-1. An overview of selected resources analyzed is provided below: Biological Resources includes fish, wildlife and protected habitat, and plants and forests. Water Resources includes wetlands, floodplains, and

streams. Coastal Zone Critical Area is the area of at least 100 feet located directly adjacent to Maryland's tidal waters, tidal wetlands, and tributary streams. Historical and Cultural Resources includes resources listed in the National Register of Historical Places (NRHP), Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP), and the Maryland Historic Trust Easements (MHT). The MHT includes significant architectural and archeological resources. Land Use includes roads and railroads located within ½ mile of system airports; local land use protections to indicate airports that have state or local land use protections in place to prohibit incompatible development; 2023 Maryland Aviation System Plan – Interim Update Chapter 6: Recommended System Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Aviation Administration Final Report February 2023 6-3 and protected lands/easements to includes conservation lands, local and federal protected land, transfer and purchase of development rights, and easements. All federal agencies, with limited exceptions, are required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 United States Code (USC) 4321 et seq.] as well as any special purpose laws before a final decision is made on federal actions that could have environmental effects. Thus, before the FAA can issue a decision on approving a new or amended ALP, grant application for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) or Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) funding, or other federal actions for airport development projects, an environmental analysis is required. Coordination is required with the FAA to determines the appropriate level of review, including a Categorical Exclusion (CATEX), Environmental Assessment (EA), and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The environmental documentation will be completed in accordance with NEPA; the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing regulations; [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508]; FAA Order 1050.1F, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures, and FAA Order 5050.4B: National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions. Should a federal action not be triggered, and a federal agency is not involved in the decision making of the airport development project, local, state, and other federal special purpose laws may still apply. While the information included herein is not designed to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and/or any local, state, and other federal special purpose laws, the intent of this section is to outline typical coordination that is required for each resource identified. The resources selected were ones that were available in Maryland's GIS database, MDiMAP and are not fully representative of the categories required for analysis in accordance with the FAA Orders referenced herein. Thus, this preliminary discussion of environmental considerations is not a replacement for national, state, and local environmental review. TABLE 6-1: ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OVERVIEW Biological Resources Water Resources Other Resources

2023 Maryland Aviation System Plan – Interim Update Chapter 6: Recommended System Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Aviation Administration Final Report February 2023 6-4 TABLE 6-1: ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OVERVIEW (CONT.) Biological Resources Water Resources Other Resources Airport Name Airport ID Fish Wildlife/ Protected Habitat Plants/ Forests Wetlands Floodplains Tier II Streams Coastal Zone Critical Area Historical and Cultural Resources Roads Railroads Local Land Use Protection Protected Lands/

Easements Montgomery County Airpark* GAI ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Ocean City Municipal Airport*
OXB ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ LO ✓ S

Chapter 6: Recommended System Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Aviation Administration Final Report February 2023 6-4 TABLE 6-1: ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OVERVIEW (CONT.) Biological Resources Water Resources Other Resources Airport Name Airport ID Fish Wildlife/ Protected Habitat Plants/ Forests Wetlands Floodplains Tier II Streams Coastal Zone Critical Area Historical and Cultural Resources Roads Railroads Local Land Use Protection Protected Lands/ Easements Montgomery County Airpark* GAI ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

2023 Maryland Aviation System Plan – Interim Update Chapter 6: Recommended System Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Aviation Administration Final Report February 2023 6-24 AIRPORT OWNERSHIP AND ROLE GAI is a publicly owned airport. Based on the level of service and type of activity, the recommended role of the airport is categorized as a Reliever facility. Both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) classify the airport as a Reliever Airport. Airport Ownership and Role Airport Ownership Private Recommended MASP Role Reliever FAA/NPIAS Role Reliever CURRENT AND FORECAST ACTIVITY Based on the estimated forecasts for the GAI, the based aircrafts will stay the same between 2019 and 2039 with 135 aircraft. The projected operations for general aviation aircraft are expected to stay the same between 2019 and 2039 at 47,253. GAI may add additional facilities based on increased aviation activity in the future. Based Aircraft Projections Based Aircraft Type Current (2019) Future (2039) Single Engine 122 122 Multi-Engine 11 11 Jet 1 1 Helicopter 1 1 Other 0 0 Total 135 135 General Aviation Aircraft Operations Projections Based Aircraft Type Current (2019) Future (2039) Total Operations 47,253 47,253 AIRPORT PLANNING Airport planning studies enable airports to assess existing conditions, analyze future needs, and identify recommended development plans over a 20-year planning horizon. The newly suggested intervals for master plan and airport layout plans in this 2023 MASP Interim Update are intended as check-in dates to guide airports to undertake planning studies as needs arise at the airport. Airport Planning Documents Latest Master Plan 2002 Latest Airport Layout Plan 2013* Notes: (*) for Airport Layout Plan indicates the date of the latest Pen &

5.4.8 Montgomery County Airpark (GAI)

The last 2008 MASP identified 6 projects for GAI to undertake. Of the 6 projects 2 were completed (installing an ATCT and installing a rotating beacon) and 4 projects remain as recommended projects in the 2023 MASP.

Extend primary runway length by 798 feet, to 5,000 feet

Improve ARC from B-II to C-II

Improve approach capability to precision approach

Improve runway lighting type to HIRL*

In addition to these 4 projects above, the 2023 MASP recommends 1 additional project that GAI should undertake to

meet its Reliever facility, service, and equipment objectives:

Perform airport Master Plan

The airport's 2022 ACIP and 2013 ALP Pen & Ink Change were reviewed. Of the 4 projects recommended in the 2023

MASP, indicated with an asterisk above (*), are shown on GAI's Master Plan and ALP.

Improving GAI's runway lighting

type to HIRL is indicated on the ACIP, for years 2023-2024 with a cost of \$850,000 and is incorporated in the

implementation plan below. It is recommended that GAI update its Master Plan to identify its airport development

needs, including the need for the above projects.

Implementing the above 5 projects will bring GAI to meet its Reliever facility, service, and equipment objectives.

TABLE 5-8: GAI PROJECT COSTS

Project Costs

Project Type Short-Term
(1-5 Years)

Mid-Term
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Long-Term
(11-20 Years)

Primary Runway Length to 5,000' \$66,160,000
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Runway Lighting Type to HIRL(1) \$850,000
Master Plan \$750,000
Total \$192,589,000 \$66,160,000 \$-

1.1 Introduction

The Maryland Department of Transportation – Maryland Aviation Administration (MDOT MAA) airport system consists of aviation facilities, including airports and special facilities, that are open for public-use. The purpose of this chapter

is to present a comprehensive inventory of existing facilities and conditions of the MDOT MAA airport system. The inventory data collected for this 2023 Maryland Aviation System Plan – Interim Update (2023 MASP) provides a foundation for understanding the existing system’s current conditions and enables a comparison to the facilities inventoried in the 2008 Maryland Aviation System Plan (2008 MASP). Further, the data collected for this chapter will be used for future system analyses, evaluations, and recommendations in the 2023 MASP.

1.2 Overview of Existing Airport System

There are 34 public-use aviation facilities included in the MDOT MAA airport system comprising 32 airports, 1 heliport (Pier 7 Heliport), and 1 seaplane base (Havre De Grace Seaplane Base). The facilities included in the MDOT MAA airport

Community Input/Feedback to the Airport Community Advisory Committee Meeting of November 19, 2024. Mollie Hilty, Hadley Farms Community

Since June 2024, this is the six meeting of the Airpark Community Advisory Committee. I have attended every meeting.

To date, I have not heard any relevant discussion of the noise and safety of the Flight Training Schools to the community from the Committee.

The County Executive appointed three (3) Resident members living within a 3 mile radius of the airpark to serve on this Committee. These Resident members have been silent to their concerns to the noise and safety of these Flight Training Schools.

According to Bill No. 24-23, (No. 3), this Committee is mandated to “generally amend the laws regarding airports within the County and regarding an advisory committee concerning airports.”

Lastly, What is the Updated Master Plan for the Montgomery County Airpark? What are the facility improvement plans or recommended changes to the Airport Layout Plan?

Thank you,
Mollie Hilty
Hadley Farms Community

Hello. I'm a 26- year resident of this area with my family and dogs. I love it here but am now concerned with the changes at the Airpark, and how to work together to develop the best path forward.

When we moved here, we got a last-minute, casual comment from our realtor that there was an airpark within 5 miles- with a "don't worry, you'll never even know it is there." And until 2019, that was largely true except for seeing some planes when driving (along Rt 124 or Snouffer School Road.)

My Concerns revolve around the continued **quality of life** in this area.

My first concern is **Safety**, including the age of the aircraft that fly and circle over our homes for hours most days (training schools; a few looks on FlightAware re aircraft flying on Sunday showed ones that were 50 and even 60 years old), and I worried about the leaded fuel they use and if their maintenance records were up to date.

I've heard some would like to see a **Tower**. A community meeting a couple years ago included reps from the FAA- one of whom stated firmly that having a Tower does NOT improve safety. What a Tower does is increase the likelihood of more jet traffic.

My second concern is **the Environment** and how both the Airpark's noise and the leaded fuel usage seem **inconsistent** with virtually every promoted County initiative, including modes of transportation, building production, and use of chemicals. I never see the Airpark mentioned. The County has or is planning on restrictions on pesticides, gas lawn blowers and is moving to LEED buildings and electric school buses. The county promotes its extensive *Agricultural Reserves*—although I'm puzzled by the sale of 17 acres to the private Davis Airport – only 5 miles away- to lengthen its runway and build hangers to expand the Airpark's operations.

What is needed is a long- term plan that could be developed together, with the nearby resident's concerns at the forefront.

Don't think that a lack of filing complaints equals non-interest of our residents, and certainly not as blind acceptance. (I often make notes of particularly loud or low aircraft and take a lot of photographs- but I've personally filed no more than 5 complaints.) **People Are Busy**- some households have multiple jobs, children, sports, and appts to juggle- this silence doesn't mean they don't have opinions and great ideas.

With that, I urge you - to schedule and plan for the **Residents Town Hall event ASAP**. I'd propose a virtual format for greatest participation of working family members; A pre-survey with open-ended questions to promote it. Some of the inputs from this these would be great additions to your First Annual Report to the County Council- in approx. 7 months.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Barbara Fischer, 11/19/24