

DRAFT March 23, 2025

Inter-Municipal Airport Task Force

Fixed Base Operator Considerations for the Master Plan

Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) are companies that service most resident general aviation and based-elsewhere aircraft at Westchester Airport and are an important consideration for the airport's Master Plan given that these aircraft are about 80% of take-offs and landings at the airport. Airlines operating out of FBOs are also a key source of tension as demonstrated by recent lawsuits by Westchester County against airlines trying to operate scheduled flights with more than nine passengers out of Westchester Airport FBOs in violation of County law. In addition, most of the violations of the voluntary restraint from flying (VRFF) during night hours are attributable to the general aviation and transient aircraft serviced by the FBOs.

The FBOs operate under long-term leases from Westchester County. There are currently five FBO locations at the airport that provide services to many operators for aircraft of all sizes, plus additional FBOs that support either one or a small number of aircraft operators. Broadly speaking, these services tend to focus on aircraft and client amenities, such as fueling and catering, rather than significant repairs.

Recommended priority focus areas

- **Ensure maximum adherence to the voluntary restraint from flying curfew:** Westchester airport operates a voluntary curfew from midnight to 6:30am. Due to Federal regulations, the curfew cannot be enforced, but the County could consider options for achieving maximum compliance with the curfew such as broadly publicizing the top offenders among aircraft operators. The frequent violators are already tabulated, but the information could be more widely distributed. The County also periodically acknowledges aircraft operators that have good compliance with the VRF and should consider publicizing these recipients more broadly.
- **Maintain strict adherence to the requirement that airlines selling tickets to more than nine passengers per flight cannot use the private terminals:** The seat limit on non-traditional commercial airlines using the FBO private aircraft terminals has been a very successful policy and should be vigorously maintained. This issue is currently being litigated, and we recommend the County stoutly defend the seat limitation requirement.
- **Protect Light General Aviation access:** Light General Aviation (GA) aircraft are defined as aircraft with a Maximum Take-Off Weight (MTOW) under 12,500 pounds. These are

generally smaller, hobbyist planes that are based at the airport and are responsible for about a quarter of all aircraft operations. Light GA aircraft use T-hangars and apron tie downs for parking their planes, with all the T-hangar space currently used for Light GA due to aircraft size limitations. Light GA aircraft are largely single-engine/piston aircraft, but the category also includes a much smaller number of multi-engine aircraft. The County should seek to ensure Light GA aircraft do not see a diminution in their airport parking capacity. There is currently a waiting list of light aircraft seeking T-Hangar space.

There have been tensions with some FBOs seeking to re-configure their space to provide hangar and apron tie down space to larger Heavy GA aircraft (MTOW greater than 12,500 lbs.) at the expense of Light GA aircraft. The Heavy GA aircraft class includes aircraft with jet engines, turbo engines and helicopters. Because of their more powerful engines, Heavy GA aircraft are generally noisier.

- **Carefully consider any requests for FBO expansion against the potential community noise, environmental and other impacts they may cause:** There is demand by some current FBOs to expand their operations and the County should ensure that it has a robust process to weigh the potential community benefits against the community costs. To the extent that modern building, safety, security and/or environmental standards dictate that ageing airport infrastructure be replaced by larger structures, the County should insist on a full and formal analysis as well as robust public input to ensure that new structures conform to the County Board of Legislatures' resolutions dating back decades.

Unleaded aviation fuel and all-electric aircraft should be encouraged, as well as the "greening" of any facilities that the County leases to operators. In addition, if it has not already done so, the County should investigate whether New York State environmental regulations tailored to specific local conditions warrant rules more stringent than Federal law requires.

More broadly, the County should seek to apply these recommendations to all airport hangars leased by private corporations.