



MARK R. BAKER
President and CEO

December 19, 2023

Ms. Francie Jacober, Chair
Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners
530 E. Main Street, Suite 302
Aspen, Colorado 81611

Dear Chair Jacober:

I am writing to share the concerns of aircraft owners and pilots operating at Aspen-Pitkin County Airport regarding the proposed fee changes being considered by the Board. Following a review of these proposed increases, we strongly urge the Board to withdraw or reject these fee increases on Part 91 general aviation operators.

According to the fee schedule presented at your December 6 work session meeting, general aviation landing fees are proposed to rise by nearly 10 percent in 2024 while airline landing fees are proposed to decrease. Additionally, users of outside covered or outside seasonal parking spaces would see a 21.5 percent fee increase.

The work meeting documents also indicate this proposal was discussed with airline representatives on November 7th, yet we are not aware of any attempt nor do the documents mention any discussion with general aviation operators who are subject to these proposed fee increases.

Moreover, it is ironic that the fee increases imposed by the airport, not the FBO, are inconsistent with comments in the Aspen Times where representatives of Atlantic Aviation mentioned they agreed to the terms of a new lease (wherein the airport will receive over a half a billion dollars) simply to “rebalance” the enormous revenues the FBO accumulated from pilots. It was also reported that these same representatives are committed to not raising FBO fees aside from market fluctuations.

In addition, county financial reports indicate the airport has been operating with a surplus of between \$7 and \$12 million dollars in each of the last two years. And now, with the county poised to collect nearly half a billion dollars more from Atlantic Aviation as a result of the egregious lease that was recently signed, along with current airport fees, and the \$77 million in federal Airport Improvement Program grants received by the county since 2005, it would seem that the new lease agreement in itself is enough to provide for a more than substantial investment in airport facilities or services.



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The county is clearly far exceeding the FAA's expectation of keeping the airport financially self-sustaining. However, as I noted in my previous correspondence to the Board, the FAA also expects airport sponsors to avoid accumulating excess surpluses. Under these federal requirements, what warrants an increase in fees on general aviation while simultaneously decreasing fees on airlines?

As you know, a public-use airport is a not-for-profit entity being used, in part, by general aviation operators for non-commercial flights. The FAA regulates these operations under 14 CFR Part 91. A key distinction between Part 91 operators and commercial operators is that commercial operators pass airport fees and FBO fees along to their customers. At the same time, Part 91 pilots are willing to pay fair and reasonable fees when airport services are rendered.

AOPA strongly urges the BOCC to reject the proposed fee increase for Part 91 general aviation users.

Regards,

Mark Baker
President and CEO

cc: Pitkin County Board of Commissioners
Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
Michael Whitaker, Administrator, FAA
Katie Thomson, Deputy Administrator, FAA
Shannetta Griffin, Associate Administrator of Airports, FAA
Grady Stone, Northwest Mountain Region Administrator, FAA
Colorado Congressional Delegation
Members, United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
Members, United States House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure