

Kyle Lewis
Great Lakes Regional Manager, Airports and State Advocacy
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
601 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20001

August 13, 2026

TRANSMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: kyle.lewis@aopa.org

RE: Response to Proposed Landing Fees, AOPA Concerns and Questions

Dear Mr. Lewis,

I am writing to you today in response to your letter dated August 5th, 2026, regarding the proposed Landing Fees and Rates and Charges Schedule for Manistee County Blacker Airport (MBL). We appreciate contacting us on the subject and recognize your representation of the general aviation community. In your letter you raise many concerns which we have considered and addressed thoroughly through our discussion and research. Our Authority and Staff remain open and willing to work together on these issues.

Our airport has served Manistee and the surrounding communities for nearly 80 years including 65 years of commercial service. As an Airport Authority, our aim is to improve and maintain our facilities and grounds such that MBL may continue to provide our residents and visitors with a gateway to economic and recreational opportunities here and abroad. Our Authority, which is made up of dedicated community volunteers, meets monthly to discuss all issues facing our airport and work collaboratively with the Manistee County Board of Commissioners to achieve this aim. This includes the opportunity to entertain public comment and be part of the ongoing conversations. I take some offense against accusations such as the claim we are trying to regulate our airspace with these fees. First and foremost, MBL employs highly capable and knowledgeable professionals to ensure we operate within the letter of all requirements.

In stark opposition to your overall tone that we are trying to inhibit or barricade our airport from recreational or private use; I feel it appropriate to share some context. MBL receives several hundred thousand dollars per year directly from Manistee County to help meet the operational, maintenance, and grant match needs of the airport. This investment has increased dramatically over several years under the current local leadership which reflects the commitment of our community to the airport. However, Manistee County has a wide array of needs for its residents, in addition to the airport, and all stakeholders of the airport must share in the investment of the airport. The revenue collected from the airport rates and charges is used for the operation, maintenance, and improvement of our airport. This Authority employs a fixed-based operator in order to ensure a safe and serviceable airport for your members to the tune of over \$30,000 per month. This includes a laundry list of services, without which, our Authority and County's investment would not be available to our customers and your members.

I would invite you to make a trip to your local municipal boat launch, where parking and use fees may be reflective of the services and condition of the launch even though it is a publicly owned asset. Or visit your local downtown where you may need to feed a meter while you enjoy dinner. In Michigan we have an amazing state park system, an envy of the world. On arrival you will find you

need a park pass and pay a daily rate for camping. Locally, we also have the amazing Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore which is federally owned and operated by the National Park Service. To visit you will need to purchase a park pass. All the fees I mentioned are necessary to maintain publicly owned assets and, in my opinion, fair examples to compare our proposed fee schedule.

Specifically, our Airport Director has provided responses below addressing your questions.

- While we appreciate that you have looked into the landing fees at other airports, comparing MBL to other airports across the state of Michigan is nominally beneficial as each one of us has a unique operating situation coupled with individual funding scenarios, therefore making blanket statements is counterproductive. Additionally, we disagree with your statement that "light general aviation itinerant operations are not adding any additional cost to the airport." Every operation contributes to the cost of the airport operation, regardless of size. Each operation is entitled to an airport environment that is maintained in a safe manner. By utilizing a weight-based scale of fees for itinerant users, we are better sharing the costs of operations across these different segments of users so that the based aircraft are not shouldering the full burden of operational costs.

Your comments have demonstrated that we need to provide a more detailed definition of a landing fee, as part of the Rates and Charges Schedule.

- Landing fees have been in place at MBL for several years, so implementing them is not new. The landing fee structure, using multiple weight-based categories is what is proposed to change. It has been current practice to exempt existing based aircraft at MBL, Military/Government operations, Angel and MedFlight operations, and touch-and-go operations. It is being recommended that this practice continue with the approval of the FY2027 Rates and Charges Schedule. Additionally, it will be defined that the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) will collect the General Aviation Airfield Activity Fees, as prescribed by the Rates and Charges Schedule, from all applicable aircraft parking on the apron and the pilot exiting the aircraft, and from all such applicable aircraft for whom services are provided. Unfortunately, this process was not communicated very well when the Proposed FY2027 Rates and Charges Schedule was introduced and distributed to the airport's tenants and users.
- The revenue generated from the General Aviation Airfield Activity Fees will be used to support the operation and maintenance of the airfield and aprons.
- Since joining the team of Manistee County Blacker Airport in October 2025, I have endeavored to evaluate all aspects of the Airport's Administration and Operations/Maintenance to explore opportunities for improvement while attempting to minimize passing costs onto the tenants and users, but this task is a journey that will continue to evolve over time as we address various aspects.

Respectfully,



Dyllan Walker
Chairperson
Manistee Blacker Airport Authority