

Increasing demand in the use of Ravalli County Airport follows the pattern of rapid growth throughout the area. Timely and thoughtful upgrading is required in order to retain Federal Aviation Administration certification and to insure adequate and safe aeronautical service for our citizens. The FAA has made recommendations for important upgrades to improve the safe operation of our airport. The Ravalli County Aviation Safety Foundation, Montana Aeronautics, and the FAA have authorized payment of all costs for these necessary improvements - NO COST TO RAVALLI TAXPAYERS! However, the offer will be withdrawn soon unless there is prompt movement toward compliance with the recommendations. The primary requirement is extension of the runway northward and slight reconfiguration to improve safety between the runway and the taxiway leading to facilities and parking. These changes will also place the flight paths over less populated areas.

Completion of the proposed airport improvements will protect the nearby land from the scars of high density housing development. Once the land adjacent to the existing airport is claimed by subdivisions there will be no opportunity for upgrades at the present location. Ravalli County will then forfeit a \$13,000,000.00 gift and the County's investment in their airport could be lost as the facility becomes more and more obsolete. Given the terrain of the Bitterroot Valley in the vicinity of Hamilton, there is no alternate tract of land suitable to develop aircraft services.

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**Airport**

# RAVALLI COUNTY AIRPORT

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Plans for compliance with  
FAA safety standards



Ravalli County Airport is an important and prestigious asset in the community. Its impact cannot be overstated. The importance of air traffic in the total transportation system can hardly be denied and our small airport is a vital link in the complex nationwide aviation system.

The health, welfare and safety of Ravalli citizens is enhanced by our local air services in numerous ways:

- serves as a vital link in fire fighting: fire spotting; air drop of water and retardant; in emergencies, provides immediate transportation for fire fighting supplies and manpower
- enhances Search and Rescue operations
- provides quick transport in medical emergencies
- provides quick access for Military, National Guard, Law Enforcement and so forth
- provides a base to meet local agricultural needs - survey, dusting, weed control - provides a base for Fish and Game wildlife surveillance
- provides County revenue through hangar and land lease fees, tie-down parking fees, fuel sale tax, etc
- provides basic pilot training - many pilots, who receive their initial flight training at the Ravalli County Airport, progress to vital services such as commercial, military, agricultural, ambulance, fire fighting and life-flight pilots
- provides local employment opportunity for skilled mechanics, trainees and service personal at the airport facility
- provides quick access to put Ravalli County on the map for visiting dignitaries, officials, candidates and so forth
- brings visitors and tourists who enhance the economy

- provides recreational opportunities and aerial viewing of the magnificent Bitterroot Mountains
- with the acquisition of land at the present location, the likelihood of developing trails, historical sites, and possibly a park and museum in the contingent, newly acquired Leonardi Ranch -- a significant enhancement of the cultural, educational, and recreational attractions of the county.

Fears of increased noise pollution are unjustified. There is less engine noise from the more modern planes. Any perceived hazard to the surrounding residential area from overhead traffic is markedly reduced by the enhanced safety and adjusted flight patterns resulting from the proposed improvements. The new flight path configuration will divert air traffic away from existing dwellings and allow for higher elevation before structures are encountered - further reducing the noise, disturbance and hazard factors. Another concern - pollution from jet engines - is undocumented. The EPA considers small jet engine pollution so miniscule that it doesn't mention it among its concerns. Modern improvements in fuel production as well as engine performance lessen this concern.

Fears that improvements will bring huge commercial-type aircraft traffic to the community are unfounded. The construction of small airport runways cannot support the weight of these large aircraft. The upgraded runway will merely increase the safety margin for the size of aircraft which are now able to use the runway. The Ravalli facility will never accommodate diverted overflow traffic from the Missoula Airport.

Ravalli County Airport is public property provided for use by all --- hobby pilots who rent their equipment as well as those who bring in privately owned aircraft. All users support the local economy through purchase of fuel and supplies and utilize maintenance and services available. It is a bonus when affluent visitors spend their money and bolster our economy. Their interest in our community and their investment in high cost property and building is a major boost to the tax base.

Just as ground travelers get their first impression of Ravalli County from the Highway 93 approach, those arriving by air first see the community through the adequacy of the airport.