

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE  
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

January 11, 1979

Senator Richard H. Pierce, Chairman  
Legislative Council  
State House  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Senator Pierce,

In accordance with the directive of the Legislative Council, directing the Committee on Transportation to study Private Airports in Maine, we enclose herein the final report of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Edwin H. Greeley in cursive.

Edwin H. Greeley  
Senate Chairman  
Transportation Committee

Handwritten signature of George A. Carroll in cursive.

George A. Carroll  
House Chairman  
Transportation Committee

TP/elk

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE  
ON TRANSPORTATION  
ON ITS STUDY OF  
PRIVATE AIRPORTS IN MAINE

Senate

Edwin H. Greely  
Cecil H. McNally  
Carroll E. Minkowsky

House

George A. Carroll  
Emile Jacques  
John W. Jensen  
Kenneth C. Brown  
James P. Elias  
Richard E. McKean  
Donald A. Strout  
Frederick B. Lunt  
Marjorie C. Hutchings  
Lloyd Littlefield

Ted Potter  
Legislative Assistant

January 11, 1979

## PREFACE

The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, by order of H.P. 2225, was directed to "...study, review, and evaluate the subject of revenues produced at private air strips throughout the State, the need for maintenance or improvements of these air fields and the desirability of State assistance at these locations...." The Committee on Transportation was also directed to submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council.

In order to implement H.P. 2225, the Committee on Transportation held three public hearings in Bangor, Presque Isle, and Saco, Maine. The Committee sent questionnaires to approximately 175 airport owners and received responses from 17 percent of the owners. In addition, the Committee surveyed airports throughout the State and studied 4 different types of airports in depth.

This report describes the role of private airports in Maine and the degree of responsibility that the state should assume with respect to the preservation and promotion of these facilities.

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation  
Study of Private Airports

Findings

1. While Maine's public air carrier and air taxi airports provide the State with essential air service, the State's privately owned commercial airports complement airports with scheduled air service and are an essential part of Maine's airport system. Not only do privately owned commercial airports in Maine provide air service to the rural areas of the State, they are the only source of air service to points throughout the State and the only source of direct service to points throughout the Northeast.

2. Private airports, particularly commercial airports, generate significant revenues for the State and are an important asset to the State's economy.

3. Some private airports are more significant to the State than others. For example, airports that exist primarily for individuals to pursue a hobby are not as necessary to the public welfare as airports that provide access to remote areas of the State, provide direct service to destinations not served by air carriers or air taxis or provide alternative landing areas to extremely busy airports.

4. As a result of substantial airport operations and capital investment costs, a number of private airport owners are under pressure to convert airports to other more profitable ventures such as housing developments, industrial sites, etc..

5. It is necessary therefore, to protect and preserve Maine's private airports, many of which are essential to the State's transportation system. Preservation and promotion of private airports, however, should not occur at the expense of the improvement and expansion of public air-carrier or air-taxi airports.

## RECOMMENDATION

Since snow removal is one of the most expensive operating costs for private airport owners, the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation recommends that monies be appropriated from the General Fund to be used to defray the costs of snow removal at private airports open to the public. Private airport owners, according to this recommendation, will apply to the Bureau of Aeronautics for snow removal funds to be administered in the same manner as snow removal funds granted to public airports.

It is the opinion of the Committee that by reducing operating costs, particularly a very expensive one, for private airports the State will not only ensure that important private airports will remain in operation, it will also free private funds to be expended for capital improvements. As the capital improvements are gradually made, private airports will be able to make a greater contribution to the State.

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation  
Study of Private Airports

Summary of Report

1. Within Maine, there are 211 airports of which 36 are publically owned commercial airports, 2 are publically owned commercial seaplane bases, and 173 are privately owned.
  - A. Of the 173 privately owned airports, 145 are open to the public.
2. Private airports will produce approximately \$165,000 in aviation fuel sales and excise tax revenues and \$125,000 in aircraft sales taxes for the 1978-1979 fiscal year. These facilities also produce property tax revenues in municipalities across the State.
3. In addition to tax revenues, private airports generate other sources of income for the State. By providing employment opportunities, serving as an important component of the State's recreation and tourist industry, and serving transportation needs of Maine business, private commercial airports make a significant contribution to the State's economy.
4. Maine's public airports providing air service or open to general aviation are located in and limited primarily to the populated areas of the coastal region from Portland to Bar Harbor.
  - A. Maine's public air carrier and air taxi airports provide direct air service to 5 of Maine's 495 municipalities and to 3 municipalities (Boston, Hartford, Manchester) outside Maine.

Eighty percent of the passengers and 93 percent of the cargo enplaned at Maine's 8 public air carrier airports in 1975, however, were enplaned at Bangor and Portland.
  - B. Portland, Bangor and Presque Isle, airports are the only airports in Maine that provide jet service.
5. On the other hand, the air transportation needs of Maine's rural areas, and direct air service to municipalities throughout Maine and the Northeast are provided by private airports.
  - A. Approximately 70 percent of the State is at least 60 minutes driving time away from scheduled air service. In addition, there is no public transportation available between Maine's public commercial airports and surrounding municipalities.
  - B. According to a committee survey of private airports in Maine in which roughly 25 respondents completed the

questionnaire, 49.4 percent of private airport use involves business. These airports either provide air transportation or access for business people, tourists, or people intending to use Maine's recreational facilities. Private flying or personal, recreational use comprises 41.1 percent of private airport use.

C. Private non-commercial airports service primarily as bases for individual aircraft used for a hobby and, to a lesser extent, as landing areas for aircraft in areas of the State in which there are no public airports.

6. Forecasts indicate that there will be substantially increased usage of Maine airports for the rest of the 20th century. Since the number of public and private airports in Maine is not expected to increase, existing facilities will experience very strong demand.

A. In 1976, approximately 450,000 passengers per year and 15,000 pounds of cargo per day were enplaned at Maine's public air-carrier airports. By 1995, it is expected that the number of passengers enplaned at these airports will increase 100 percent and enplaned cargo tonnage will increase 300 percent.

B. Maine's private commercial airports will also experience very substantial increases in use. For example, Twitchell's airport in Turner, Maine experienced an annual average increase in general aviation operations of 24 percent between 1970 and 1975. Projections indicate an annual increase in operations of 10 percent through 1980, 8 percent through 1985, and 6.5 percent through 1990.

The recent opening (1976) of a private commercial airport in Eliot, Maine provides a much used service in a large area that has been without airport facilities for 20 years. This airport serves not only a large section of southern Maine, it also serves eastern and coastal New Hampshire. Projections indicate a very substantial increase in use.

7. The greatest problem confronting private airports is inadequate funds to maintain and improve these facilities.

A. The major operating costs of private airports consist of municipal and State taxes, grass mowing, and snow removal. The major capital costs consist of paving runways and taxiways, the installation of lights, and the installation of instrument landing systems.

B. Capital improvements, for the most part, are very costly, and most private airports cannot obtain bank loans with the airport as collateral to finance these improvements. In addition, high interest rates discourage airport owners from investing in capital improvements.



## PRIVATE AIRPORTS IN MAINE

There are 211 airports in Maine, the great majority of which are privately owned. According to Bureau of Aeronautics data, 173 airports are privately owned, and 145 of these are open to the public. There are 36 public commercial airports and 2 public commercial seaplane bases.

Private airports differ significantly from each other. For example, some airports including the commercial airports in Turner, Eliot, Greenville, and Brewer provide a wide range of services. These airports not only provide charter service to any point in the northeast, they also offer flight instruction, aircraft repair services, aviation fuel, and, in some cases, aircraft for sale. Twitchell's airport in Turner and Folsom's airport in Greenville also provide seaplane facilities and offer a means of transportation into remote areas.

On the other hand, many private airports are not commercial facilities and serve primarily as landing areas open to use by people with an interest in aviation. Approximately 30 airports are not open to the public and are available only to the owner.

Maine's private airports are scattered throughout the entire state, whereas, public commercial airports providing air carrier and air-taxi service are located primarily in populated areas along the coast from Portland to Bar Harbor. While these public air carrier, air-taxi airports provide direct transportation to 5 of Maine's 495 municipalities and to 3 municipalities outside Maine. (Boston, Hartford, and Manchester, New Hampshire), Maine's private commercial airports will provide direct charter flights to nearly all municipalities in Maine and the northeast that have aviation facilities.

Approximately 70 percent of the State is at least 60 minutes driving time from scheduled air service. In addition, there is no public transportation available between Maine's public commercial airports and surrounding municipalities. As a result, access to public commercial and particularly air carrier airports is difficult.

Unlike the public commercial airports, private airports are located throughout the State but primarily in rural areas. Some of these airports provide a variety of services.

According to a Transportation Committee survey which 25 airport owners fully completed, 49.4 percent of private airport use at these airports involves business. These airports either provide air transportation or access for business people, tourists, or people intending to use Maine's recreational facilities. Private flying for personal use or recreational reasons comprises 41.1 percent of private airport use.

The Maine Department of Transportation indicates that air transportation data for Maine, compiled and projected by two consulting firms for air transportation has been developing at

a rapid rate in the recent past, and the trend is expected to continue. Since the number of public and private airports is not expected to increase, many existing airports are expected to experience very strong demand in the future. For example, between 1963 and 1977 scheduled air carrier passenger enplanements increased 350 percent and scheduled air carrier cargo enplanements increased 466 percent. Between 1978 and 1985, the former is expected to increase 145 percent and the latter is expected to increase 110 percent.

General aviation aircraft activities, most of which occurs at private airports, has also substantially increased. Between 1963 and 1977 general aviation operations increased 250 percent, and between 1978 and 1985 the number of operations is estimated to increase 150 percent.

While Maine's private airports have been experiencing increased usage, most of this has occurred at private commercial airports which provide charter flight service. For example, Twitchell's airport in Turner, Maine experienced an annual average increase in general aviation operations of 24 percent between 1970 and 1975. Projections indicate an annual increase in operations of 10 percent through 1980, 8 percent through 1985, and 6.5 percent through 1990.

The recent opening (1976) of a private commercial airport in Eliot, Maine provides a much used service in a large area that has been without airport facilities for 20 years. This airport serves not only a large section of southern Maine, it also serves eastern and coastal New Hampshire. Projections indicate a very substantial increase in use.

Although Maine's private airports offer significant potential part of the transportation system of the State, there are a number of factors adversely affecting private airports. Most of these factors stem from inadequate funds. Capital improvements, such as paving and lighting, etc., which can cost tens of thousands of dollars cannot be funded from loans based on the airport as collateral. Operating costs including grass mowing, snow plowing, etc., are also very costly. If a private airport is open to the public and provides some services such as hangar space, aircraft repairs, or flight instruction but does not offer charter flights, it is very difficult for the airport owner to net the necessary monies to make the improvements.

Another problem concerns the attitudes of municipal officials toward private airports. Municipal officials often times do not perceive the contribution that private airports make to the municipalities in which they are located. As a result, airport property taxes and aircraft excise taxes which are collected by the municipalities are not used to encourage or help private airports.

Private airports that are open to the public provide a number of benefits to the State and municipalities. Not only do some of these facilities, particularly private commercial airports,

provide convenient air transportation to points throughout the northeast, they help local business, serve as a significant asset to the recreation and tourist industry of the State, provide access to remote areas of Maine, and provide sites for emergency services including fire protection, and medical services.

Private airports also produce revenues for the State in the form of aviation fuel sales and excise tax revenues and aircraft sales tax revenues. Estimates for 1978-1979 project \$165,000 from the former and \$125,000 from the latter.



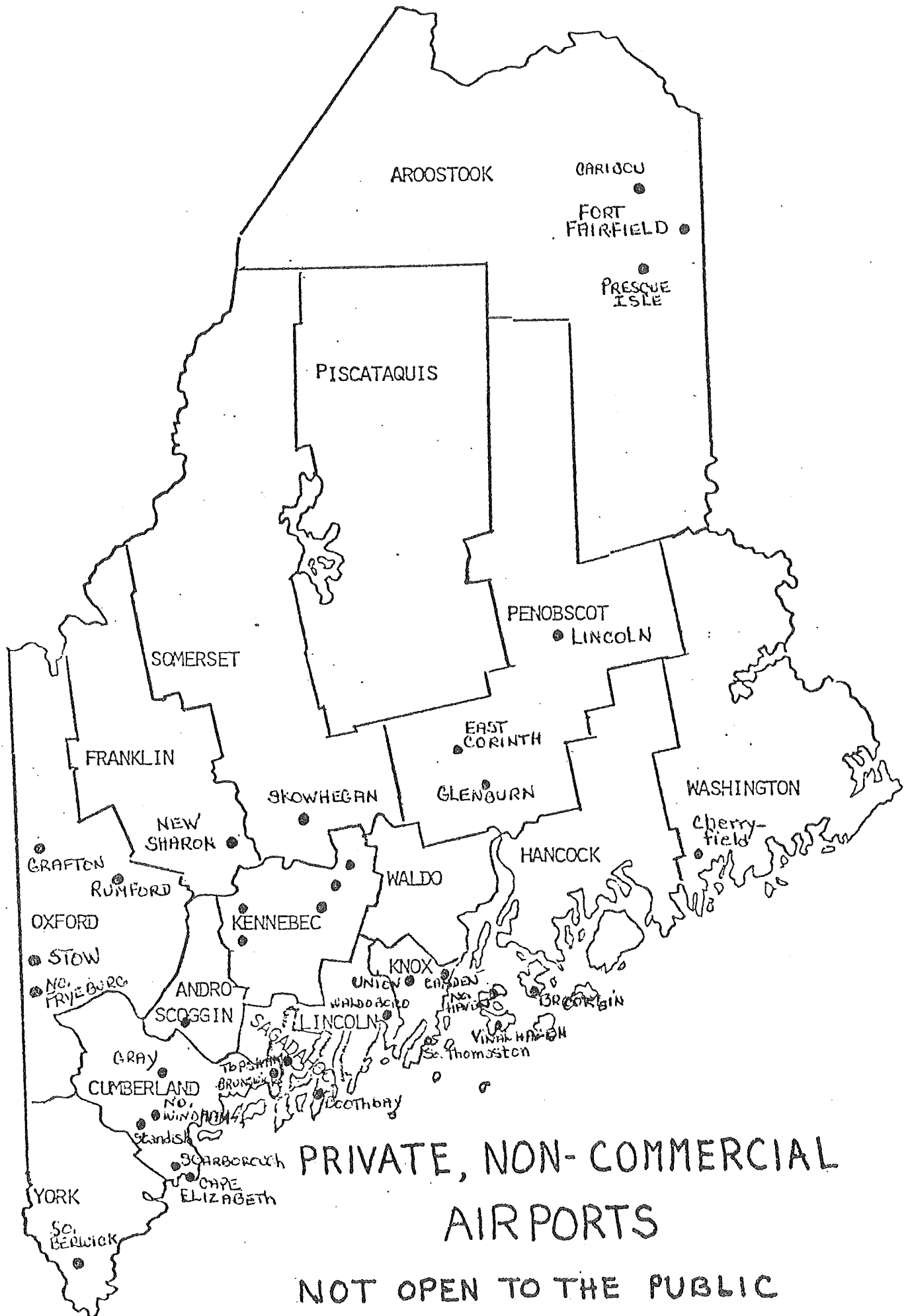
PUBLIC COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS



# PRIVATE COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS



PRIVATE NON-COMMERCIAL  
AIRPORTS  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



January 11, 1979

109TH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

AN ACT to Provide Monies for Snow Removal at Private Airports open to the Public

Sec. 1. Appropriation. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Transportation, Bureau of Aeronautics the sum of \$110,250 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1980 and the sum of \$110,250 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1981 to carry out the purposes of this Act. The breakdown shall be as follows:

	1979-80	1980-81
Department of Transportation		

Bureau of Aeronautics

All Other	\$110,250	\$110,250
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To provide funds to private airports open to the public to fund 50 percent of the snow removal costs incurred at each airport. Funds shall be made available only to private airports that qualify and apply for the funds.

STATEMENT OF FACT

The intent of this bill is to partially alleviate owners of private airports open to the public from the financial burden of snow removal costs. Private airports are a valuable asset to the State, but private airport revenues are very limited. Most private airports that are open to the public have insufficient monies to properly maintain these facilities. Since private airports make a significant contribution to the Maine economy, an



appropriation to reduce snow removal costs at these facilities will enable these facilities to continue to contribute to the Maine economy.

5.  
D OF R.

STATE OF MAINE

In House

~~Ordered,~~

Whereas, there are a considerable number of private air strips in the State; and

Whereas, many of those air strips provide opportunity for the flying public to utilize the facility; and

Whereas, the users of these facilities pay aeronautical taxes; and

Whereas, no direct State assistance is made available for maintaining or improving these airstrips; now, therefore, be it

Ordered, the Senate concurring, that the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation shall study, review and evaluate the subject of revenues produced at private air strips throughout the State, the need for maintenance or improvements of these air fields and the desirability of State assistance at these locations; and be it further

Ordered, that the committee shall complete this study no later than December 1, 1978 and submit to the Legislative Council within the same time period its findings and recommendations including copies of any recommended legislation; and be it further

Ordered, that upon passage of this Order in concurrence, the Clerk of the House shall forward a suitable copy of this Order to the Senate and House chairmen of the Committee.

OUT OF ORDER  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
READ AND PASSED

HP2225

MAR 13 1978  
SENT UP FOR CONCURRENCE

*Edwin Deit*  
CLERK

*George A. Carroll*  
(Carroll)  
Name:

Town: Limerick

ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH