



# Connections



Wings plans to move the parking area for visiting turbine aircraft down the hill from the terminal area (A) and next to the taxiway (B). It will improve quality of life for neighbors.

## Noise control procedures working at Wings Field

The owners, operators, and pilots of Wings Field continue to work diligently to make Wings a good neighbor. The noise abatement program the airport launched a year ago has been successful in rerouting helicopter traffic, building awareness among pilots of noise sensitive areas, and redirecting noise as much as possible away from the neighborhoods that surround the airport.

“I live in Blue Bell Woods in the house that’s closest to Wings and I don’t notice the noise,” says Ron Shore, a former board member of the Blue Bell Woods Residents Association. “I’m not an advocate for or against Wings. I have no problems with the operations at the airport. Helicopters make the most noise, but they’ve gotten quieter. As for jets, not many come into Wings, and the few that do are quieter than the regular propeller airplanes.”

For safety’s sake, every airport establishes a traffic pattern so aircraft flying to and from that field will have some standard of operation. This rectangular route typically brings landing aircraft on a path parallel to the runway, about three-fourths to one-mile away, and at an altitude of 800 to 1,000 feet above the ground as they near the airport and make their turns for a final approach. Wings has adjusted its traffic pattern to

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## Parking apron will cut noise and fumes for neighbors

Wings Field has filed an appeal with Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas to overturn an August 2003 vote by Whippen Township supervisors denying a permit to construct a special parking area for visiting aircraft.

Dennis Daly, president of Wings Field Preservation Associates, LLP, the owner of Wings Field, said, “We are appealing the supervisors’ vote because we believe the parking apron is in the best interests of our neighbors on Huntsman Lane and in Blue Bell Woods. It is an essential part of our noise control program. Relocating the parking area designated for visiting turbine aircraft will significantly reduce perceived noise levels and move fumes from engine

operations further from their homes.”

An *Itinerant Parking Apron* is nothing more than a parking lot for visiting airplanes and helicopters. Every airport has one. Today Wings’ visitor parking apron is located up the hill from the runway, in front of the Driscoll Terminal Building and maintenance hangar. This parking area holds the visiting aircraft (typically corporate helicopters, turboprop airplanes, and a handful of small business jets), but it is never filled. To reach the area, pilots have to taxi uphill for more than a minute from the runway and gun their engines to get up the hill, producing additional noise and fumes.

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# Issue in Focus

## Noise . . . it's all relative

Sound experts describe *noise* as "any unwanted sound that interferes with normal speech and hearing or sound that is intense and annoying." *Perception* is an important factor in determining how people react to noise. What is music to the ears of some people – e.g., firefighters, rock guitarists, dog owners, Harley drivers, pilots – is an unwanted intrusion for others.

Most people say they can live with aircraft noise because those sounds are less obnoxious than the cacophony of trucks, sirens, construction sites, and motorcycles that one confronts walking down a city street or highway. But for some, the intrusion of airplane sounds into their home is a source of irritation that becomes magnified because planes are conspicuous and unfamiliar.

The FAA has set standards for machines that fly, and they apply these noise standards uniformly throughout the country. Most pilots argue that any noise standards set by local officials for their community should be applied equally and fairly to all noise sources – trucks, motor cycles, lawn mowers, weed wackers, and not just aircraft.

As a basis for noise comparison, in June 2002 Wings conducted a noise demonstration for members of the Wings Community Advisory Committee. The committee members saw and heard a variety of single and twin engine propeller-driven airplanes, a small business jet, and a corporate helicopter take-off and land at the airport and fly over three off-field locations. A noise meter recorded sound levels for each aircraft operation.

Many of the committee members were surprised to find that the business jet was quieter than most of the other aircraft. The noise it generated was quieter than noise levels produced by a car passing 25' away on a street (77dBA Citation jet take-off versus 80 dBA car).

Helicopters were noisier than airplanes, take-offs produced more noise than landings, and landings often produced less noise than a normal conversation. At one point during the demonstration, some members of the group commented that the lawn mower at the airport was drowning out the aircraft sounds.

Here are the sound meter readings for the aircraft operating at Wings during the demonstration. As a frame of reference, sound levels for other normal every day situations are also presented.

### Higher dBA means Louder Sound Level


Normal conversation	60 dBA
Inside moving car	70 dBA
Car passing at 25'	80 dBA

### Aircraft taking off at Wings Field

Beech Baron (twin propeller)	75 dBA
Beech Bonanza (single prop)	81 dBA
Cessna 172 (single propeller)	70 dBA
Cessna 180 (50 year old single engine propeller)	94 dBA
Piper Navajo (twin propeller)	73 dBA
Cessna Citation (business jet)	77 dBA

### Aircraft landing at Wings Field

Beech Baron (twin propeller)	56 dBA
Cessna 172 (single propeller)	58 dBA
Cessna Citation (business jet)	58 dBA
Sikorsky S-26 (helicopter)	81 dBA

Wings' association with noise pre-dates its beginnings as an airport. Frank Oat, a renowned pilot who started his aviation career as a teenager at Wings in the 1930's, grew up across Narcissa from the field. "In the 1920's it was a dairy farm owned by Henri Merriken," remembers Oat. "We got used to hearing cow bells at night, but on many occasions we were awakened well before dawn by the sound of Mr. Merriken singing to his cows. He was an opera singer in Philadelphia and, when he milked the cows, he practiced his arias on them. Some of my mother's friends thought it was a fine way to wake up. Maybe it was music to their ears, but it was noise to my mother and her young children." 


## Parking apron vote appealed

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Wings wants to relocate the parking area for these visiting turbine aircraft down by the runway and next to the main taxiway. After landing, most visiting pilots would need to taxi only about 15 seconds to reach it. Neighbors would enjoy improved quality of life – taxi times would decrease, noise levels would drop about 20 decibels (difference in noise levels between normal talking and a Mack truck passing by), and the parking area would be a football field length further from their homes.

The idea for the Itinerant Parking Apron actually came from a community advisory group in 1996 that saw the relocated parking area as a means for reducing noise and improving air quality. Wings agreed and included the group's idea in their airport development plan. But airport opponents lobbied against the Itinerant Apron in 2003 saying that the proposed parking area would increase the size and frequency of aircraft using the airport.

"Moving a parking lot from one part of the airport to another is not going to attract a horde of aircraft that have never been to Wings before," says Dennis Daly. "If they are not coming to Wings now, they are unlikely to use the field in the future."

Daly says the parking apron will not attract larger-sized aircraft. "The reason larger aircraft are not using Wings is not because of any lack of parking space, but because the runway is too short to safely accommodate them. It is unfortunate that a small group of misguided activist neighbors has convinced township officials to object to a parking lot. They are essentially shooting themselves and their neighbors in the foot because this apron will improve quality of life in their neighborhood." 

# Wings' noise control procedures

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minimize the number of houses, schools, and businesses over which aircraft fly.


"Pilots landing on Runway 24 fly a downwind leg to the northeast towards Ambler that takes them over the farms that lie between Butler Pike, Sheaff Lane, Stenton Avenue and Skippack Pike," says Zachary Dreier, chief pilot for the Montgomery County Flight Academy at Wings Field. "Pilots make a left turn and start descending over the horse farm on Butler Pike, and then turn left for their final approach over the Prophecy Creek Park. The pilots know where the noise sensitive areas are and they avoid flying over them."

Wings has also adopted special traffic patterns that keep aircraft using the field at least 1,200 feet above the ground (except during actual take-offs and landings and bad weather that brings low clouds) rather than the standard 800 feet used at most general aviation airports. Traffic patterns for jet and turboprop aircraft and helicopters are even higher – at least 1,700 feet above the ground. The operators of the large

helicopters that regularly use the field have adopted unique patterns for their flights to reduce noise.

Aircraft on the ground at Wings have their own set of procedures. There are special areas for engine run-ups, time limits for auxiliary power units and for aircraft waiting to pick up or discharge passengers with engines running.


Wings has conducted extensive pilot training seminars on its noise abatement policies for pilots based at the airport, flight instructors, student pilots, and regular visitors. It has also produced brochures that include an aerial map showing the locations of noise sensitive neighborhoods and schools.

Wings also has an automated weather observing system (AWOS) that pilots listen to prior to takeoff and landing. As part of the broadcast, pilots are reminded of noise abatement procedures. "Every pilot using Wings listens to that weather report," says Dreier. "It keeps them focused on noise abatement. Very few airports include a noise abatement message in their weather report." 

## CEO Pilot

Whitpain resident Steve Hamilton learned how to fly in the US Army 35 years ago. As a captain, he flew Huey helicopters over Vietnam. Today, Steve is chief executive of ChemLogix, a Blue Bell-based transportation logistics firm.

Steve says that his Beech Bonanza gives him a sales and service edge in a highly competitive business. "We recently had a day's notice for a critical

meeting with a client in central Michigan. By airline, it's an overnight, \$1,400 a person, two-stop trip. The airlines had us leaving at 1 p.m. on Monday for an 11 a.m. Tuesday meeting, and returning home at 10 the next night. With the Bonanza, we left at 7:30 Tuesday morning, flew direct to Midland, had our meeting, and were home by dinner. It is an efficient way of doing business." 



N6688Y is Steve Hamilton's Beech A36TC Bonanza. It made the 450 mile trip to Midland in 2-1/4 hours, carrying Steve and five passengers at speeds over 200 miles per hour.



## Wings Businesses

### Philadelphia Aviation Country Club



Its opening on April 24, 1932, drew aviators from Boston, New York, Wilmington and PATCO Field. Names like duPont, Sharples, Taliafero, Forbes and Moon came to its "house warming" in their Stearmans, Travel Airs, Wacos, Fleets, or Monocoupees.

This was opening day for the Philadelphia Aviation Country Club. The members only club, established in a farm house at Wings, boasted fine food, drink, a swimming pool, a tennis court and a cordial atmosphere in a 300 year-old farmhouse that even included guest rooms for overnight stays. That was important because the PACC was a famed stopover for flyers and business people who traveled along the east coast during aviation's early days.

Today, over 70 years later, the Philadelphia Aviation Country Club still welcomes members for lunches and dinners. Then as now, its purposes are the same – "to promote the science of aeronautics; to develop aviation among its members; and to provide an atmosphere which encourages the exchange of business interests." Members, their business associates, families and friends still enjoy the camaraderie, fine food, refreshments, pool, tennis court, and the terraced porch with unparalleled views of Wings Field and the large, broad, flat meadows that make up one of the largest remaining tracts of open space in Whitpain Township. 

# Wings Facts

## How busy is Wings?

According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, there were 39,000 annual operations (take-offs or landings), or about 107 a day, at Wings during a twelve month period between Summer 2002 and Spring 2003. To some people, that may seem to be a lot, but 107 flights a day needs to be put into perspective –

- Each day 16,000 cars, trucks, and buses pass in front of Shady Grove Elementary School on Skippack Pike. Each day 20,000 motor vehicles pass the Epiphany School on Walton Rd.
- In 1990, when the now-defunct Wings Airways was at its peak, there

were about 152 operations a day at Wings (55,540 for the year).

- On January 27, 1962, the Putnam Group reported in various newspapers an estimate of 197 operations a day, or 72,000 a year at Wings.

The real story about activity at Wings is that since its peak over 40 years ago, volume has dropped off significantly.

## Housing values soar in area around Wings

In a recent letter to homeowners in neighborhoods surrounding Wings Field, a political candidate wrote, "Home prices in your community have remained stagnant and even depressed since the last runway extension while other townships have seen them soar in the past few years."

Any homeowner in the Blue Bell area knows that this is totally untrue. In fact, Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures show that sale prices for homes in Whitpain Township increased 14.5% between April 2003 and April 2004 – hardly stagnant and depressed.

In the Blue Bell Woods community across the street from Wings Field, the numbers are equally impressive. According to MLS, the average sale price in Blue Bell Woods from 2002 to 2003 increased 13.9% while the average number of days on the market decreased from 43 to 21. From the last four months in 2003 to the first four months of 2004, the average Blue Bell Woods sale price increased 15% while the average days on market decreased from 23 to 13.

Imagine, two weeks to sell a house.

## Aircraft Watch

### Cessna 172



Owner: Cahill Consulting Corp., Hillel Levinson, President  
Primary Uses: 80% flight training, 10% personal travel, 10% business  
Seats: 4 (pilot and 3 passengers)  
Cruise Speed: 135 mph  
Range: 550 miles non-stop  
Weight: 2,450 lbs. (less than Honda Civic)

### Cub Crafters Top Cub



Owner: Barr Asplundh  
Primary Uses: 100% personal travel  
Seats: 2 (pilot and 1 passenger)  
Cruise Speed: 127 mph  
Range: 450 miles non-stop  
Weight: 2,000 lbs. (less than Nissan Sentra)

### Piper PA28-151 Warrior



Owner: Luc Jean Roy  
Primary Uses: 60% business, 10% personal travel, 30% flight training  
Seats: 4 (pilot and 3 passengers)  
Cruise Speed: 127 mph  
Range: 480 miles non-stop  
Weight: 2,400 lbs. (less than Saturn Ion)