

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** Robert Peach <rpeach@blueorigin.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 9, 2014 7:46 PM  
**To:** dan@rpa-hln.com  
**Cc:** Glenda Wiles; drh29@bitterroot.com  
**Subject:** Ravalli County Airport Improvement

Rick,

As a pilot, aircraft owner, and aero engineer who commutes for work, I am writing in support of the efforts to improve the Ravalli County airport. I think many of the questions and issues are of value not just to aircraft owners and operators, but to the community in general with potential to attract more businesses and provide local jobs. I live in Stevensville and use the airport there, but only because it is the most convenient from my house. If I was in the south valley, Ravalli Co. would be the choice. I do come into the airport there on occasion for aircraft services, and fly-ins.

I recognize many folks are not enthusiastic about jet traffic into the airfield, and noise seems to be the driving concern most of the time. But there are operational ways to deal with that which should be palatable to both the non-flying public and those that use air transport for business and recreation.

A vibrant airport will begin to attract enterprises which not only service the airport clientele, but the community in general. It is a growth opportunity. But the airfield must be safe with the appropriate length runway(s) and location with regard to proximity to the existing community. Runways oriented in the proper directions for prevailing winds are part of this to allow control of operations and prevent unnecessary overflight of populated areas.

The property around the airport must also be protected from encroachment due to inappropriate development. This is a vital point. This is the most problematic issue plaguing many airports today big and small. Airports which have been in existence for years often wind up in the way of population growth and the zoning has been ineffective in most cases. We then wind up with noise complaints and more recently, environmental charges (often trumped up) in attempts to eliminate airports. So land acquisition should be part of any strategy of any airport that is looking to prosper.

Hunting and fishing attracts many tourists who come here and spend money supporting many jobs in the area. It can be another growth opportunity if the airport can handle the target market and not force everyone to go to Missoula.

Aircraft operators buy goods and services from businesses at the airfield which in turn puts money into the community and can provide good jobs in the right circumstances. An airport can also provide non-flying businesses advantages with fly-in access for potential customers, clients and suppliers who would otherwise have to fly into Missoula. Businesses generally like airfields for the additional reason as it tends to be an industrial area by nature and not intrusive to surrounding residential areas giving them more flexibility for expansion. It doesn't hurt either to have operators flying folks in who may have the wherewithal and be interested in investing in the area. It would not be surprising for someone to visit the area, and then return for a more permanent reason based on a positive experience. I fly a 4-seat Cessna, but when I land at Billings to visit my son and taxi over to the Jet Center, I am treated much the same as the big jets which land there...that's a positive experience that a good well run and competitive airport can provide. I'll give them business in the future for sure.

I believe it is in the County's interest to promote the airport and take the necessary steps to make the needed improvements. Making the airport safer and more capable will have a positive outcome, but it takes commitment and investment. Accepting the status quo, will only lead to greater and greater difficulty keeping it viable. I'd happy to participate in any future discussions on this issue.

**Cheers,  
Bob Peach  
Stevensville  
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