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To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my support and approval for the expansion and improvement of the Ravalli County Airport in Hamilton, Montana. I believe that proceeding with the preferred Option 4, is the most environmentally responsible thing that we can do.

My father moved his large growing family to the Bitterroot Valley forty two years ago. I remember visiting the airport as a small boy, and wandering around the airport ramp looking at the many different airplanes. It instilled in me a love of aviation and helped fuel a fire and desire to one day become a pilot. Since that day in 1972, there have been many progressive changes occur in our pristine valley, and now it's the airports turn. It's time to seize the moment. We have a wonderful new four lane highway that includes a Veterans Memorial Bridge, linking the county to the outside and it's time to complete a vital aviation connection as well.

It has been interesting and amusing at times to see the opposition to safety and improvement by many members of the local community. I have often been approached by family members who on initial inquiry are surprised that I am in favor of the airport expansion. It seems the opposition has been able to craftily spread disinformation in an attempt to curtail and stop a logical and worthwhile project. Once I explain a few facts about the airport, about jobs, safety and dispel the rumors which are strategically planted, I am usually thanked for helping them see the light.

In my own life, there are many worthwhile projects and accomplishments that I would like to see happen. Most often, finances are the limiting consideration in the final course of action that I take. The beautiful thing here is the airport expansion will benefit all for years to come with no cost added on to the local taxpayers. The funding is secured, the need is here, the time is now. Let's see clearly through the smoke and things that would impede our vision and act responsibly by proceeding in the name of safety, and bring our airport up to not only minimum standards, but to a standard which we would like to pass on to the next generation.

It's hard to find a better place to live than the Bitterroot Valley. We have the most beautiful backyard that we could possible imagine. The finest people on the face of the earth are right here. We love our valley, the seclusion, the peace and tranquility that it offers. Let's complete the missing part of our infrastructure by expanding and improving on what we have. It makes sense to proceed. Montana and in particular Ravalli County is home to the Last Best Airspace. Let's keep it that way. We have the opportunity to accomplish something for supporters and detractors alike by giving the town and High School a little more breathing room by stretching the airport out and away from what has crowded in around it.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Wissenbach

Conservationist, Father, Pilot, Aircraft Mechanic, Lover of the Bitterroot

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