MCRA Response to the 2025 ACAC Annual Report

Submitted to the Montgomery County Executive, County Council, and Airpark Community Advisory Committee

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Executive Summary

The Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) submits this initial response to the 2025 Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) Annual Report, which outlines fifteen recommendations aimed at improving oversight, community engagement, and operational practices at the Montgomery County Airpark (KGAI).

MCRA appreciates the ACAC's commitment to public service and shares its goal of ensuring the Airpark remains a safe, transparent, and well-managed public asset. While several recommendations align with MCRA's current practices and future goals, others reflect misunderstandings about the roles and responsibilities of the various entities involved in Airpark governance—including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) and the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS).

Key points of MCRA's response include:

- Oversight and Governance: MCRA actively manages the Airpark and works in coordination with FAA, MAA, and DPS. The Airpark is not under investigation for any FAA violations.

- Fly Friendly Program: Guidelines are in place and promoted through signage, pilot guides, and meetings. MCRA welcomes specific suggestions from ACAC to enhance these efforts.

- Noise Complaints and Transparency: MCRA follows FAA best practices and is exploring improvements, including Spanish-language support and publishing summary data online.

- Facilities and Safety: MCRA proactively collaborates with DPS to address any identified issues. The H Row hangar renovation is under review and will comply with permitting requirements.

- Monitoring and Reporting: MCRA maintains an ADS-B based aircraft monitoring system. The system provides a extensive reports on touch and go, traffic counts including time of day, tracks traffic based on locally based aircraft and iterant operations, as well as other reports. These reports are available on the website.

- Community Engagement: MCRA supports outreach through student field trips and job fairs, and MCRA is interested in reinstating annual open house events as well as working with ACAC on other options that may engage the community in understanding the airport's value and contributions to the entire community.

MCRA invites ACAC to continue contributing actionable recommendations and requests the committee's input on traffic pattern changes and the level of community support for an air traffic control tower. This response reflects MCRA's ongoing commitment to collaboration, compliance, and community trust.

Introduction

The Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) respectfully submits this initial response to the 2025 Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) Annual Report. As the owner and operator of the Montgomery County Airpark (KGAI), MCRA remains committed to transparency, safety, and collaboration with all stakeholders—including local residents, elected officials, and aviation partners.

The ACAC report, published in June 2025, outlines fifteen recommendations aimed at improving oversight, community engagement, and operational practices at the Airpark. While MCRA appreciates the committee's dedication and shares its commitment to continuous improvement, several findings in the report mischaracterize the roles and responsibilities of the various entities involved in Airpark governance.

This response provides clarifications, acknowledges areas of agreement, and outlines MCRA's current practices and future commitments. It also highlights the collaborative efforts underway with the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA), and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and invites ACAC to continue contributing specific, actionable recommendations.

MCRA welcomes constructive dialogue and looks forward to working with the ACAC and elected officials to ensure the Airpark remains a safe, well-managed, and valuable public asset for Montgomery County.

Background

The Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) owns and operates the Montgomery County Airpark (Airpark) that is located in Gaithersburg, MD. The Airpark is one of the busiest airports in the state of Maryland, with 170 based aircraft and around 85,000 operations (take offs and landings) in 2024. The MCRA is represented on the Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) by the Airport Manager, Justin Bollum, as an ex-officio member. The MCRA did not take part in drafting the report and has identified many inaccurate statements. For example, the Airpark has never been found in violation of any Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Grant Assurances, nor is it currently under investigation for any FAA grant agreement violations. At the time of the report, there were

no fire code violations, and the last inspection was completed and passed in 2025. The MCRA has worked closely with the DPS and has requested inspections of the facilities whenever it identifies potential issues. The MCRA continues to work closely with all Local, State and Federal agencies to remain in compliance with all laws and regulations.

The ACAC is formed under Chapter 42 of the Montgomery County code and must provide a report that includes recommendations to the County Executive, County Council and MCRA. The ACAC report published June 2025 includes 15 recommendations.

Response

1.   The MCRA should execute more proactive management and oversight of Airpark processes, uses, and tenants.
Response: The MCRA actively manages and oversees the Airpark. The report does not accurately describe the roles of the various entities involved in the operation of the Airpark: 1) the MCRA, as the landowner, is responsible for the runways, taxiways, and safety of the Airpark facilities; 2) the management of the use of the Airpark, including facilities such as hangars, the terminal building, and tie-downs, as well as flight schools, fueling, and line management, are controlled by Montgomery County Airpark One LLC (a private company not owned by MCRA) through a 99-year master lease agreement that is set to expire in 2059; 3) the Maryland Aviation Administration controls the licensing of airports in the state and conducts annual inspections to ensure the safety of the Airpark facilities; 4) the Federal Aviation Administration is responsible for the licensing and certification of pilots, flight schools, and aviation maintenance personnel with exclusive statutory jurisdiction over how aircraft are maintained and flown, how pilots operate aircraft, and where aircraft may or may not operate in the navigable airspace.

2.   The MCRA should provide additional resources including but not limited to funds for operations, monitoring and management of the Airpark.
Response: The MCRA appreciates the ACAC's dedication to improving the Montgomery County Airpark. However, we do not concur with the recommendation to provide additional resources without specific actionable suggestions. The recommendation lacks the necessary detail to guide effective implementation. As previously mentioned, several entities are involved in the operation and oversight of the Airpark.

3.   The County Council and County Executive should provide more oversight of MCRA management and specifically management of the Airpark.
Response: The Montgomery County Airpark (Airpark) is a part of the National Planned Integrated Airport Systems and is therefore subject to extensive oversight of governing bodies. Nationally, the airpark is subject to oversight by the Federal Aviation Administration

Airports District Office (ADO), which includes facility standards, obstruction removal, and grant administration. The FAA Flight Standards District Office regulates the users of the Airpark by licensing pilots and mechanics, certifying flight schools, and governing flight safety. At the state level, the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) is the airport licensing body in the state and conducts an annual review of the Airpark facilities, including runway and taxiways, and files the FAA form 5010, the airport master record. From the county level, the Airpark is subject to annual safety inspections by the Montgomery County Fire Marshal, and works closely with DPS permitting, and various other requirements. The MCRA continues to work with all the governing authorities to ensure the Airpark operates safely and contributes positively to the community.

4.   If the MCRA is unable or unwilling to implement the recommendations, the County Executive and County Council should transfer oversight of the Airpark to another entity.
Response: The MCRA is always willing and available to consider comments, feedback, suggestions, and recommendations to make changes when they are appropriate and achievable. The MCRA intends to consider all such communications included in the ACAC report fully and to act on such communications as may be warranted, appropriate, legal, and supported. The MCRA is a separate non-profit entity that owns and operates the Montgomery County Airpark, as established under Chapter 42 of the Montgomery County Code. This structure makes the transfer of oversight to a county agency a complex process.

5.   The MCRA should create very specific Fly Friendly guidelines with the goal of reducing the impact of operations on local communities.
Response: Specific Fly Friendly guidelines have been in effect at the Airpark since the 1990s. The MCRA has collaborated with the prior Airpark Liaison Committee, FAA, and Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association to update guidelines on its website, Pilot's Guide, and broadcast them on the Automated Weather Observation System, which pilots listen to when flying into or out of the Airpark. These guidelines are based on industry best practices and recommendations from the prior Airpark Liaison Committee.

6.   Once specific Fly Friendly guidelines are established, the MCRA should provide continuous and robust Fly Friendly awareness, promotion, education, monitoring, and positive enforcement using multiple strategies, marketing, and education methods to obtain compliance with these guidelines.
Response: The MCRA currently provides a robust program promoting Fly Friendly guidelines by hosting tenant meetings, flight school, and flying club meetings where the Fly Friendly guidelines are reviewed. The current Pilot Guide is distributed to new tenants, posted in the terminal building, and on signage at the Airpark. The MCRA does speak with pilots who appear not to adhere to the Fly Friendly guidelines. However, it is essential to

note that these guidelines are not enforceable.

The MCRA worked extensively with the Airpark Liaison Committee to update the Fly Friendly guidelines and incorporated suggestions on changes to the Pilot Guide, website language, and Airpark signage.

7.   The MCRA, in conjunction with the FAA, should proactively provide more overt education, monitoring, and feedback to the entire Airpark operator community including DC Metro and all tenants and pilots to better adhere to FAA guidance on non-towered airport operations.

Response: The MCRA collaborates closely with the FAA Safety Team at the Baltimore Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and has conducted multiple training sessions with subject matter experts to address this issue. We appreciate the ACAC's suggestion and are currently considering how to increase the number of meetings. It is essential to clarify that the FSDO maintains responsibility for monitoring and overseeing pilots' operation of aircraft to, at, and from the Airpark, and to date, has identified no violations related to non-towered airport operations.

8.   The MCRA must immediately correct all Montgomery County Code violations including but not limited to building and fire code violations and conduct a thorough follow up code inspection.

Response: This statement is not accurate. At the time of this report, there were no recorded violations. A comprehensive fire code inspection was completed before the issuance of this report. MCRA has proactively collaborated with the DPS to ensure thorough facility inspections. Should any violations be identified, MCRA requires the Lessee to address and the MCRA works governing body to ensure issues are resolved promptly. The MCRA is working with DPS and Lessee to address any issues related to the H-Row hangar renovation that the report raises.

9.   MCRA should plan, develop, and deploy a professional noise complaint tracking system with a centralized database that tracks complaint status from receipt through investigation and documents what specific actions were taken in response to each complaint or groups of complaints. The ACAC recognizes that high complaint volumes may necessitate grouped responses to similar issues/complaints.

Response: The MCRA adheres to FAA best practices in addressing noise complaints and revised the complaint form at the request of the airpark liaison committee. MCRA reviews each complaint, management investigates every complaint received, contacts the pilot if it is not in compliance with the fly-friendly guidelines, and provides a response to new complainants. There is no action or communication sent to pilots if they are operating

normally and in compliance with Fly Friendly Guidelines.   Actions that airport sponsors and local authorities can take, regarding noise, are governed by FAA noise regulations.

10.   This updated and modernized noise complaint tracking system should be made available in Spanish to reflect the large number of households and people who primarily speak Spanish at home within many communities near the Airpark (approximately 26.1% in the 20879 Zip Code that surrounds most of the Airpark speak Spanish at home. See https://data.census.gov/profile/ZCTA5_20879?g=860XX00US20879#populations-and-people).
Response: MCRA appreciates ACAC's recommendation and will investigate creating a separate form for the Spanish language on our website.

11.   MCRA should publish noise complaint summary data in both English and Spanish on the Airpark website, including the number of complaints received Year-to-Date and during the current month to improve transparency with the community at large.
Response: The MCRA will review options to improve transparency and publish noise complaint data on its website.

12.   The MCRA should fund enhancements to the existing aircraft monitoring system to better capture touch-and-go operations and identify aircraft deviating from noise abatement procedures. This includes the implementation of a geofencing capability that would enable identification of aircraft not executing the established noise abatement procedures. This operational data should be compiled into daily reports and made publicly available on the Airpark's website.
Response: The MCRA has established an ADS-B monitoring system. At present, there are no plans to increase funding for this area. It should be noted that aircraft engaged in touch-and-go operations follow pattern procedures which are different from noise-abatement procedures. Notably, the FSDO maintains jurisdiction over airborne aircraft and is solely responsible for determining violations of procedures. Consequently, the MCRA does not possess the authority to make such determinations.

13.   The MCRA should update existing daily operational reports on the website to allow for the identification of specific aircraft and operators violating noise abatement procedures and show the number of touch-and-go operations conducted by each aircraft and operator. This transparent reporting will enable community members to track individual operator patterns and flight activity impacting their neighborhoods.
Response: The MCRA provides operational data through its system that is published on the airpark's website. We are in discussions with the vendor to see if a report can be built to accommodate this request.

14.   To foster trust between the Airpark and surrounding community, the MCRA should create a centralized information hub on the Airpark website with all relevant operational and administrative documentation. This should include budget information, funding requests and status, grant details, planned infrastructure projects, correspondence with aviation authorities, Frequently Asked Questions, and Master Plan updates. Regular updates will demonstrate transparency and help community members understand Airpark operations and plans.

Response: Based on this request, the MCRA will continue seeking methods to enhance its website and provide information to the public.

15.   The MCRA should perform proactive outreach to the greater Montgomery County community to include conducting events like annual Airpark open houses and educational programs.

Response: The MCRA looks forward to improving its community outreach with the assistance of the ACAC. We continue to provide field trips to local students and job fair opportunities for the Magruder High School aviation program. In the past, we have conducted open-house events and will review options to bring that program back.

We appreciate the ACAC's work and report. We remain committed to working with elected officials, the ACAC, and the greater community to ensure the Airpark remains a safe, transparent, and well-managed public asset.

Moving forward, the MCRA requests that the committee review and provide recommendations on the following topics in its next report.

- Determine the community's support regarding a control tower.

- Provide detailed recommendations on ways to improve the Fly Friendly guidelines.

- Recommendations on ways to improve community outreach.