

To whom it may concern,

My name is Bud Beacham, and I have lived in East San Jose since July 1990. During that time I have become quite familiar with Reid-Hillview (RHV), and its impact on the neighborhood and the quality of life for East San Jose residents. Currently, I am also an Airport Commissioner, but these comments are made as a private citizen living in East San Jose in regard to the upcoming 2018 RHV Master Plan. [1]

I will just be providing a few brief points on various areas, and links to source. Most data is from either the FAA, or the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA).

Since RHV is a recreational airport, the aircraft using this airport are what is known a piston engine aircraft, not turbine (jets) aircraft. So, my comments will focus on piston engine aircraft, and the private pilot and student pilot population.

### **Piston Aircraft Demand:**

According to the latest (2016) GAMA statistical handbook, in 2016, piston airplane shipments fell to 1,019 units compared to 1,056 units the prior year.

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[3, page 10]

Additionally, the FAA forecasts declining piston engine aircraft into the future. This is the type of aircraft used at RHV.

“The U.S. active general aviation fleet is anticipated to remain stable over the next 20 years, growing less than 0.5 percent in total through 2038, according to the latest FAA forecast. This stability is anticipated to come on the strength of the turbine aircraft and helicopter markets, which are expected to offset **declines in the piston aircraft fleet**, the agency added.” [5]

Basically, they are saying jet sales will be what causes any increase in GA aircraft, and piston engine aircraft will continue to decline in numbers.

“The FAA cited stronger U.S. GDP and corporate profits as drivers of the turbine growth, but in turn **believes “unfavorable pilot demographics, overall increasing cost of aircraft ownership, coupled with new aircraft deliveries not keeping pace with retirements of the aging fleet” will dampen the piston market.**”  
[5]

### **Pilot Population:**

In regard to the pilot population, GAMA states in their 2016 statistical handbook that

“The U.S. active pilot population continued its downward trajectory in 2016 and reached one of its lowest numbers in decades at 584,362 pilots at the end of 2015, based on preliminary data. There was, however, an uptick in the number of student pilot certificates held at the end of 2016 (128,501

compared to 122,749 the prior year). The number of active private pilots decreased by 4.9 percent to 162,313 pilots.” [3, page 10]

I will return to these two statements, ‘There was, however, an uptick in the number of student pilot certificates’ and ‘The number of active private pilots decreased by 4.9 percent to 162,313 pilots’ a little later.

According to AOPA research, most people start flight lessons for recreational reasons.

“Recreational goals are the most common reason for learning to fly and most students learn outside the Part 141 environment.” [10, page 44]

This means they are learning for fun, not to be a future airline pilot.

According to AOPA, the dropout rate for student pilots appears to approach 80%.

“Approximately 60 percent of those who earn a student pilot certificate never earn a higher pilot certificate (e.g., private, recreational, or sport). And many more drop out before ever obtaining a student pilot certificate—**placing the overall dropout rate at an estimated 70 to 80 percent.**” [10, page 2]

However, since AOPA is an aviation advocacy organization, I suspect the dropout numbers are lower than what is really occurring. I suspect the real dropout rate is close to a 100%. Additionally, there is an equally high dropout rate for private pilots after they get their license. At some point, many just stop flying due to a variety of reasons. This has been estimated to be 50% after 5 years.

In regard to the increase in student pilots and activity at RHV, there are two main reasons for the increase.

First, the FAA has changed to expiration date for student pilot certificates, and this has resulted in an increase in the current numbers. We must remember that just because one has a student pilot certificate does not mean that this person is actively using it. They can have dropped out of training, but are still being counted as student pilots.

“In July 2010, the FAA issued a rule that increased the duration of validity for student pilot certificates for pilots under the age of 40 from 36 to 60 months. This resulted in the increase in active student pilots to 119,119 from 72,280 at the end of 2009. Starting with April 2016, there is no expiration date on the new student pilot certificates, which generates a cumulative increase in the numbers.” [20, Table 4]

Second, as mentioned above from AOPA research, the majority of these students are doing this for a recreational experience. Generally, recreation is done with surplus income, and surplus income results from a good economy. This is our current economic state, but we all know that at some point the economy will again go into recession. When that occurs, people will cut back on their recreational spending, and the result will be a large reduction in general aviation activity. Recreational dollars will be spent on much less expensive activities.

This helps to explain the decrease in pilot totals in Santa Clara County over the last ten years. I have been downloading FAA pilot statistics over the last ten years and these are the results. While the actual

FAA data is attached, I am just going to look at the Student Pilot and Private Pilot numbers, since a Student Pilot will transition to a Private Pilot if they do not dropout, and pass the FAA test.

Date	Private Pilot	Student Pilot
07/01/2009	1955	412
02/01/2010	1881	386
03/01/2011	1801	571
01/01/2012	1741	538
01/01/2013	1627	562
01/01/2014	1548	571
01/01/2015	1538	590
01/01/2016	1513	627
01/01/2017	1382	691
01/01/2018	1357	808

Basically, this shows that while the student population has remained relatively consistent, the Private Pilot population continues to decrease. I suspect this reflects both the high dropout rate of student pilots, and private pilots who decide to stop flying. The student pilot increase in 2016, 2017, 2018 is due to the FAA changes in student pilot certificates. They no longer expire, so it gives the impression there are more students than there actually are.

In regard to student pilots at RHV, my personal feeling is:

1. Nobody should be learning how to fly an airplane in the middle of a residential neighborhood.
2. Flight training is a completely incompatible activity with a residential neighborhood.
3. It is not the responsibility of SCC taxpayers to provide the airlines with pilots.
4. Why are we training Japanese, and other foreign nationals, how to fly at RHV?
5. This is why the county needs to stop accepting FAA Grant money. No flight schools should be operating at RHV.

### Other Data:

Mostly from GAMA.

The GAMA/FAA data for 2016 shows that 63% of RHV operations are local. A takeoff, or landing equal one operation. A Local operation means the aircraft never leaves the pattern, basically it just flies in circles practicing takeoffs and landings. An itinerant operation is where the aircraft leaves the airport, or arrives at the airport from outside the pattern.

Year	Itinerant	Local	Total	Local Percentage
2016	55654	95541	151701	63

### Aircraft Property Tax:

Please see the attached GAMA data showing that the average age of piston aircraft (**45.4 years**) is increasing, and so is the average of pilots.

One point that is brought up in airport discussions is that aircraft owners pay property tax to the county on their aircraft. While true, there is a glaring tax loophole for these aircraft. If an aircraft is older than 35 years, and is on display for a few times a year, the owner is given a tax exemption.

“This exemption provides a property tax exemption for "Aircraft of Historical Significance." For property tax purposes, "Aircraft of Historical Significance" means any aircraft which is an original, restored, or replica of a heavier than air powered aircraft which is 35 years or older....” [30]

[1] The comments expressed in this document are my own personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of the County of Santa Clara and the Airports Commission, nor do the views affect my role as an Airports Commissioner.

[3] [https://gama.aero/wp-content/uploads/2016-GAMA-Databook\\_forWeb.pdf](https://gama.aero/wp-content/uploads/2016-GAMA-Databook_forWeb.pdf)  
<https://gama.aero/facts-and-statistics/statistical-databook-and-industry-outlook/>

[5] <https://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/business-aviation/2018-03-21/faa-forecast-turbine-fleet-keep-ga-market-stable>

[10] [http://download.aopa.org/epilot/2011/AOPA\\_Research-The\\_Flight\\_Training\\_Experience.pdf](http://download.aopa.org/epilot/2011/AOPA_Research-The_Flight_Training_Experience.pdf)

[20] [https://www.faa.gov/data\\_research/aviation\\_data\\_statistics/civil\\_airmen\\_statistics/](https://www.faa.gov/data_research/aviation_data_statistics/civil_airmen_statistics/)

Use the 2017 Active Civil Airman Statistics

[30] [https://www.boe.ca.gov/proptaxes/ahs\\_exemption.htm](https://www.boe.ca.gov/proptaxes/ahs_exemption.htm)