

FAA Forecasts Growth For General Aviation

By 2030, the general aviation fleet will grow by about 50,000 airplanes and 52,000 active pilots, the FAA forecast this week. The **forecast** calls for robust growth in the long term and predicts business use of GA aircraft will expand at a faster pace than personal and recreational use. With growth forecast across all sectors -- traffic at the nation's 35 busiest airports is expected to increase by 60 percent -- infrastructure upgrades will need to keep up. "A safe, efficient and vibrant aviation system is vital to our nation's economic health," said Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. "We must find long-term solutions that will keep the U.S. aviation industry competitive and moving forward into the future." Light sport aircraft are expected to increase by about 825 aircraft per year through 2013, then taper off to about 335 per year. Sport pilots, who numbered 3,248 at the end of 2009, will increase to 14,100 by 2030, the FAA estimates.



The forecast, which comes after a short-term period of slow growth in aviation activity, underscores the need for the Next Generation Air Transportation System (**NextGen**), as well as continued investment in airport infrastructure projects, the FAA said. "This forecast makes a very strong business case for NextGen," said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. "Without NextGen, we won't be able to handle the increased demand for service that this forecast anticipates." Meanwhile, the FAA reauthorization bill, which will provide funding for the agency, continues to be stalled in Congress. Legislators from Tennessee have come **under fire** this week for trying to derail the bill due to a provision that would make it possible for some FedEx workers to unionize.

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