



Chapter 736 Newsletter for November 2014

AOPA sends strong ADS-B message

AOPA's message that the cost to equip is too high and must be lowered substantially was heard loud and clear at a "call to action" summit on Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) put together by the FAA.

The Oct. 28 summit included representatives from general aviation organizations, airlines, and manufacturers who were brought together to identify barriers to ADS-B equipage and begin strategizing about how to address them.

FAA Deputy Administrator Michael Whitaker made it clear that the agency has no intention of changing or delaying the mandate that would require all aircraft to be equipped with ADS-B Out by Jan. 1, 2020, in order to fly in airspace that now requires a Mode C transponder.

But AOPA Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Jim Coon told the group that the general aviation community is facing what could prove to be an insurmountable barrier to meeting the mandate—the cost to equip.

Coon told participants that more than 81,000 of the 188,000 certified piston-powered aircraft on the FAA registry are worth \$40,000 or less, and those aircraft have a weighted average value of \$25,800. That puts investing at least \$5,000 to install equipment that delivers no clear benefits well beyond the reach of many owners.

"Most of these pilots will park their planes in a field, something this industry cannot afford," Coon said. "Spending nearly 20 percent of the plane's value for a piece of equipment just doesn't make sense to many of our members."

AOPA delivered a similar message earlier in a **strongly worded letter** sent to FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. In that letter, AOPA warned that thousands of aircraft could be grounded by the cost of the mandate, adding that "it would be irresponsible to insist on enforcing a mandate that does not reflect the realities of general aviation flying and would cause irreparable harm to this industry."

Some participants in the Oct. 28 summit, including representatives from the Experimental Aircraft Association and some ADS-B equipment manufacturers, indicated that they, too, are concerned about the high price to equip and what it will mean to the GA community.

Following an opening general session, meeting participants broke into groups to identify barriers and potential solutions or strategies that could lead to solutions. The summit concluded with each breakout group reporting its findings back to FAA leaders.

Among the key barriers to equipage identified during the summit were cost and availability of upgrading GPS receivers, the need for streamlined certification procedures, development of more low-cost avionics, improving product availability, clarifying requirements, and ensuring repair station resources are available to complete installations.

“We made our point very clearly, and at the close of the meeting cost was identified as a critical barrier for the general aviation community,” said Coon. “We know our message was heard; now we need the FAA to take this issue seriously and work with us, manufacturers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the kind of portable, flexible, and above all affordable solutions GA needs to meet this mandate are available and allowable under the rule.”

To continue the work of the summit, the FAA established the “Equip 2020 Implementation Group” to address the barriers identified during the Oct. 28 meeting. The next meeting of the implementation group is scheduled for Nov. 18.

ADS-B Revolt: AOPA Responds

What will it take for the FAA to sit up and take notice that we have a huge ADS-B problem on our hands? The risk is dire. Because of the FAA's 2020 mandate that the vast majority of airplanes be outfitted with approved ADS-B devices in just over five years time, we risk losing tens of thousands of airplanes and nearly as many aircraft owners/pilots. AOPA leader Mark Baker wrote *Flying* a letter detailing his organization's thinking behind its get-tough approach with the FAA on this subject.

In his position letter Baker reiterated his plea to the FAA, saying that the economics of ADS-B will not work for many, many owners of light GA aircraft.

Baker put the focus on the FAA, writing “in recent weeks, the FAA has said it will not reconsider the timeline for compliance, hence our strong reaction suggesting the need for lower cost solutions.” While it's no surprise the FAA isn't backing down from its deadline — they'd be crazy to do that — it is disappointing to see the agency not coming up with solutions to what no one can deny will be a huge problem within 18 months as avionics shops' schedules start to fill up and thousands of owners give up hope of meeting the deadline.

While not making any specific technology proposals in his letter, Baker pointed to the existence of the FAA's TSO for low cost ADS-B gear for aircraft not technically required to carry it, such as gliders and hot air balloons. He asks, “Is there any real risk in investigating new solutions when the alternative is having 50,000 or more aircraft unable to fly in airspace they routinely use today?”

We applaud AOPA's tougher stance on ADS-B. It's At the *Flying* Aviation Expo, a several representatives from manufacturers of ADS-B gear were asked for their take on

Baker's call for less costly solutions. The one who was willing to make a statement simply said that he didn't see any change on the horizon and urged his customers to equip. Not bad advice for those who can pull it off.

But as Baker has pointed out repeatedly, there are thousands of owners who can't or won't be willing to drop \$7,000 (let's get ready here on costs) or more on ADS-B gear that does nothing for them.

Is there an answer? Look for *Flying's* specific proposal soon for how we can solve the problem — that is, if the FAA is serious about solving the problem and not just burying its bureaucratic head in the sand, as it has done so many times before.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, Nov. 17th** at the Weathervane Restaurant in Waterville. As is our usual practice, please arrive by 6:00 pm if you plan to have dinner so that the meeting can begin at its normal time of 7:30 pm.