



Penn Stohr stands beside his biplane in 1927.

Economic Impact Study

Plains Airport

2026

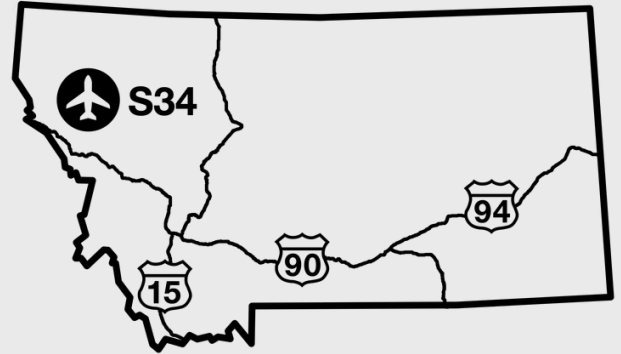


MONTANA
Department of Transportation



Plains Airport Impact

Plains Airport is a public-use general aviation airport located in Plains, in Sanders County in western Montana along the Clark Fork River. The airfield features a primary runway of 4,650 feet and handles approximately 2,000 annual general aviation operations, with 95 percent transient traffic. Airport activities include recreational flying, search and rescue, flight training, law enforcement, wildland firefighting, and military exercises. The airport provides fixed-wing air ambulance transfers for the local hospital and serves as a seat plane loading facility for the Montana DNRC and U.S. Forest Service. An annual Fourth of July fly-in pancake breakfast is held at the airport.



Total Economic Impact on Montana



Economic Impact
\$421 Thousand



Payroll
\$161 Thousand

Qualitative Impacts

In addition to generating substantial economic impacts, this airport supports a variety of harder to quantify “Qualitative Impacts” that support critical statewide safety and enterprise. The 2026 Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Airports Study documents the following non-inclusive list of qualitative impacts associated with the airport:



Aerial Firefighting
Supports Wildland Firefighting Operations.



Police/Law Enforcement
Supports Police and Emergency Response Ops



Emergency Medical Aviation
Supports Air Ambulance Operations



Military Exercise/Training
Used for Military Training and/or Transit Flights



Perishable Goods Shipping
Enables Time-Sensitive Transport of Perishable Goods



Flight Training & Education
Provides Pilot Training and Aviation Education

Source: Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Airports.

Montana Airports Support Our State



Jobs
39,400



Economic Impact
\$6.4 Billion



Payroll
\$2.4 Billion

Montana's airport system functions as a critical component of the state's transportation and economic infrastructure, enabling connectivity across a large and geographically dispersed landscape. Through scheduled commercial service and general aviation activity, airports provide access between Montana communities and regional, national, and international markets, supporting passenger travel, freight movement, and time-sensitive operations that cannot be efficiently served by surface transportation alone.

Beyond mobility, Montana's airports support a broad range of economic activity that contributes to employment, income generation, and business operations throughout the state. Aviation-related enterprises, on-airport and nearby businesses, visitor spending associated with air travel, and ongoing investment in airport facilities collectively generate economic activity at the local, regional, and statewide levels. These effects extend across multiple sectors, including tourism, healthcare, construction, professional services, and natural resource industries.

To document both the economic contributions and broader community functions of the state's aviation system, the Montana Department of Transportation undertook a comprehensive, statewide evaluation of Montana's airports. The **2026 Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Aviation** study examines the full scope of airport-related activity, including aviation and non-aviation businesses, visitor spending, capital investment, and secondary economic effects, while also identifying the specific roles individual airports play in supporting residents, businesses, and critical services across Montana.

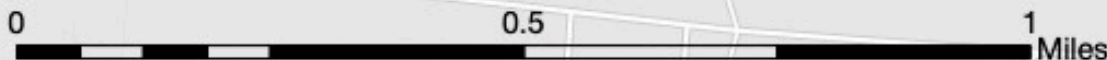
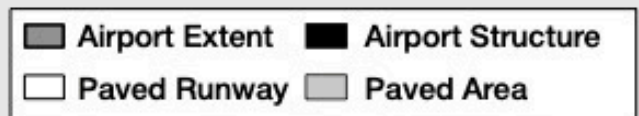
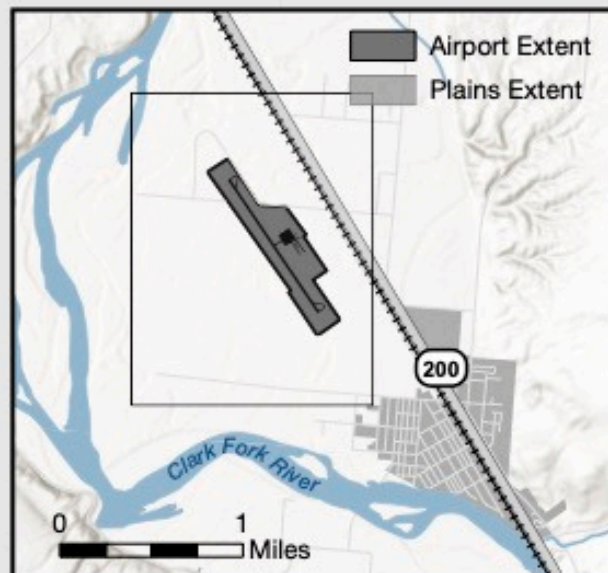


Penn Stohr Field (S34)

Plains, MT



47° 28.2' N
114° 25.3' W
2467'



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