



# The Sky Is Falling

FAA-Atlanta TRACON's proposal of modification to Atlanta's Class B airspace.

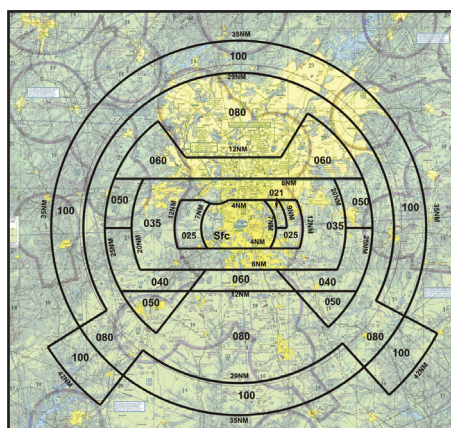
In May 2006, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) opened its fifth runway. The additional runway was built to help ease delays at the "world's busiest airport." ATL acquired this title by accommodating more than 90 million passengers and 978,824 flights for several years now. But, according to the FAA, it's time for a change, and this change will impact all pilots.

Atlanta isn't unique in that there are numerous airports within Class B airspace. However, it is unique in the fact that four of the state's busiest airports lie underneath this airspace: DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK), Fulton County-Brown Field (FTY), Gwinnett County-Briscoe Field (LZU) and Cobb County-McCollum Field (RYY), and all are within a 25-mile radius of Atlanta.

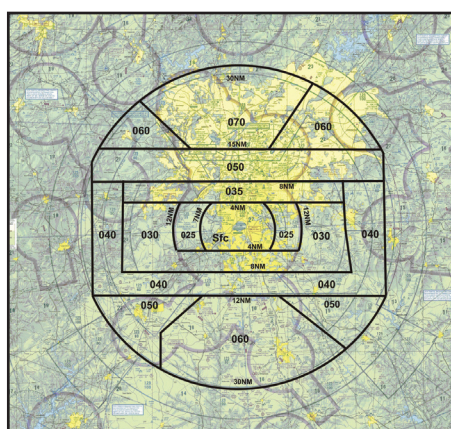
In 2008, these airports' annual operations totaled more than 488,830, and when you include ATL's operations of approximately 978,000, it quickly becomes a crowded picture. But this picture isn't complete, because there's an additional six airports and countless private airports located beneath the Atlanta Class B airspace. With all of these operations, any changes to existing ceilings are of concern to Atlanta's aviation enthusiasts, as well as the public.

## The Proposal

The Atlanta TRACON (Terminal Radar Approach Control) states "with the increase in traffic at ATL, the Class B airspace is too small to contain the traffic during high volume and therefore inef-



Current Airspace



Proposed Airspace

ficient for the user (airlines) and the controller." The following images show the existing Atlanta Class B airspace and the proposed Class B airspace.

The proposal reduces the Class B floor over PDK from its current 8,000 feet and 6,000 feet to 5,000 feet. At FTY, the airspace floor is currently 6,000 feet and 3,500 feet but is proposed to drop to 5,000 feet and 3,500 feet.

Both PDK and FTY stand to be impacted greatly because of their proximity to ATL. Currently LZU is at 10,000 feet and 8,000 feet but is proposed to drop to 9,000 feet and 6,000 feet. RYY is now at 8,000 feet and

proposed to drop down to 7,000 feet. Covington Airport (9A1) takes the biggest drop from a current floor of 8,000 feet to a proposed 4,000 feet. A more detailed presentation can be found at the Georgia Business Aviation Association's (GBAA) website, <http://www.gbaa.org/>.

## The Effects

While many may consider 1,000 to 2,000 feet not very restricting, lowering the Class B airspace will compress existing GA traffic into a smaller area. Operations below the Class B airspace consist of pleasure flying, flight training, ballooning, as well as business aircraft, which are all too often excluded from Class B. The GBAA is concerned and wants to make the GA community aware of these changes.

With PDK being the second busiest airport in the state, its 228,000 operations will be forced into this lower airspace, along with FTY's 103,000 yearly operations. With more commercial airline traffic flying at lower levels in proximity to Atlanta, the probability of IFR delays and noise complaints will only increase.

While this may increase efficiency and operating costs at ATL and for its users, this issue will most certainly negatively impact all others. A lower floor at FTY and PDK will require controllers to impose lower initial altitudes when arriving and departing satellite airports, which are inefficient and costly in time and fuel to those airport users.

These lower floors will allow commercial traffic to be lower, forcing satellite airport traffic to be lowered to

avoid commercial traffic. Therefore, air traffic will fly closer to homes, schools and businesses, thus, increasing noise complaints at these satellite airports. PDK averages 120 noise complaints a month; reducing the amount of airspace above this airport will only increase the complaints and discord between the airport and the community.

The Atlanta GA flyer has long needed a route through the Class B airspace. Transitional routes are a certified flight checked route published on Low IFR en route, TAC and terminal charts, as well as VFR sections. While they're certified for IFR operations, they may be using VFR without appropriate permission.

Establishing T-routes within the Atlanta Class B airspace would help alleviate some of the traffic that's skirting around the TCA floors while allowing pilots to feel much safer with a clear well-defined, efficient route. This suggestion isn't addressed in the new proposal.

### The Process

The Georgia Department of Transportation Aviation Programs Office (GDOT) was contacted in October 2008 and asked by Atlanta TRACON to review these preliminary modifications to the Class B airspace. GDOT identified representatives from the public and private GA sectors; local and national industry representatives (GBAA included); and formed an Ad Hoc Committee to provide feedback and solutions on the proposed redesign. The Ad Hoc Committee met three times throughout 2009 and filed formalized comments with the Atlanta-TRACON.

The Atlanta TRACON's next step in the process to implement the re-

design is to hold a series of public forums (Informal Airspace Meetings) on the proposed changes. The dates for these meetings have been released and are listed. The purpose of these meetings are to solicit aeronautical comments on the proposal's effects on the planned action. At each of the four meeting locations, three presentation times of 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. will be conducted. Written comments will be accepted, as well as comments from attendees after each presentation.

### Your Opportunity

As a fellow aviation enthusiast, the GBAA encourages you to attend one or several of the meetings and decide how this may affect your livelihood or your hobby. As commercial air travel increases, the airspace around these high-traffic hubs will need to expand in order to accommodate the traffic. Don't let this happen without having input toward a solution. This article only touches on the larger issues, and as a pilot or a service provider, the impact from the changing Class B airspace could have far reaching effect on you and your ability to enjoy flying. →



**David Small** has been a member of the GBAA since 1996 and the chairman for the last six years. In addition to his GBAA responsibilities, he's employed with Cox Enterprises as FTY's flight operations administrator.

## INFORMAL AIRSPACE MEETING

**SUBJECT:** Planned Modifications to the Class B airspace at Atlanta (A80), Georgia

The FAA will hold informal airspace meetings regarding a plan to modify the Atlanta Class B airspace area. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit aeronautical comments on the proposal's effect on the planned action. (FAA Order 7400.2).

The informal presentation will be conducted at 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and again at 7 p.m. Each presentation will be the same, so attendees may arrive at any of these times. Following each presentation, there will be time for questions and presentations by attendees. Also during the meeting, written comments may be submitted.

The changes are expected to make the Class B airspace area fully support the procedures for the current operations. The chart depicting the planned Atlanta Class B airspace area design is included to assist in the preparation of comments prior to the meeting.

### February 22, 2010

3 p.m.—8:30 p.m.  
Cobb Co. PD Precinct 1  
2380 North Cobb Parkway  
Kennesaw, GA 30152  
770-499-4181 for directions

### February 25, 2010

3 p.m.—8:30 p.m.  
City of Covington City Hall  
2194 Emory St. NW  
Covington, GA 30014  
770-385-2022 for directions

### March 1, 2010

3 p.m.—8:30 p.m.  
Chamblee Civic Center  
3540 Broad Street  
Chamblee, GA 30341  
770-986-5016 for directions

### March 4, 2010

3 p.m.—8:30 p.m.  
Peachtree City Falcon Field  
7 Falcon Drive  
Peachtree City, GA 30269  
770-487-2225 for directions