

## **AVIATION**

The Berks County Aviation network is a vital transportation link consisting of nine airports and seven heliports. They vary in size and function from small general aviation airports to larger facilities with corporate/commercial air service.

There are two public airports in Berks County. The largest is the Reading Regional Airport. This is the County's primary air connection to national markets. The smaller Grimes Airport is a privately owned, public use airport. The airport is also home to the Golden Age Aviation Museum. The museum focuses on pre-World War II aircraft and the early days of aviation. The Grimes Airport has one turf runway, Runway 11/29, which is 2,720 feet long. The majority of the airport's activity is recreational flying. In addition to the airports listed above the region has seven additional privately owned, private use airports.

### **Reading Regional Airport**

The Reading Regional Airport, also known as Carl A. Spaatz Field, is a general aviation airport located in Bern Township and operated by the Reading Regional Airport Authority (RRAA). The airport is equipped with a control tower, a passenger terminal building, hangars, maintenance facilities, and crash-fire-rescue facilities. It has two Instrument Landing System (ILS) equipped asphalt runways: Runway 13/31 with a length of 6,350 feet and Runway 18/36 with a length of 5,151 feet. The Reading Regional Airport is the only public use airport in Berks County with asphalt runways. The airport had approximately 46,250 aircraft operations (flights arriving and flights departing) in 2024.

<b>Aircraft Based at the Reading Regional Airport - 2024</b>	
<b>Type</b>	<b>#</b>
Single Engine	83
Multi Engine	28
Jet	15
Helicopter	6
Other	1
Total Aircraft	133

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Airport Data and Information Portal (ADIP)

Regular passenger service ended in 2004. In its current role, the airport concentrates primarily on serving general aviation and corporate aircraft. In the future, the airport sees itself serving more flight training activity, along with more recreational, business, and air taxi operations and continues to build and increase its reputation as a recreational and corporate general aviation facility.

In early 2022, the Commissioners of Berks County took control of the Reading Regional Airport. This was considered a positive step in making sure the airport continues safe, profitable, and efficient operations well into the future. In October 2022, the airport completed its strategic plan for the future of the airport. Part of implementing that plan included the County purchasing the two existing Fixed Base Operators (FBO) at the airport in early 2024. This created one FBO – Reading Aviation. An FBO is a service facility for aircraft and passengers at an airport. The FBO traditionally provides fuel, aircraft servicing, hospitality, and other services. A single FBO reduces the amount of confusion and lower service levels competition between multiple FBOs has historically created at the airport. The County taking over the FBOs allows the RRAA to improve consistency and facilitate future growth at the airport. With developers looking to build hangar space, business development along the Route 183 corridor and at Berks Park 183 industrial site, and any potential consideration of bringing back commercial air service, the airport anticipates significant development around its

property. This development would provide ample opportunity for the airport, which in turn will create additional need for a focused plan to capitalize on those opportunities. The RDG Strategic Plan gives the Airport Authority and the County a blueprint as to what areas to focus on and what growth could look like in the future to ensure that the airport remains a leading economic and community development asset for Berks County.

Berks Park 183 industrial site is directly adjacent to the airport at its northeastern corner. The Berks County Industrial Development Authority purchased the property in 2019 from the Federal Aviation Administration. The site originally served as a military base during World War II. To date the site has been redeveloped to include up to 816,000 square feet of industrial space thus creating new opportunities for business recruitment and job creation in the region. It is foreseen that this site could have a positive impact on the airport as tenants of the industrial site look to utilize the airport to supplement their operations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers for total enplanements and total operations in 2020 decreased drastically at just over 43% from the previous year (2019). Total operations and based aircraft slowly increased after 2020. The Federal Aviation Administration expects increased interest in the airport due to an increased demand for corporate aircraft operations because of concerns about safety and flight delays at other larger airports. Of note, enplanements for 2024 are low because of some of the changes currently taking place at the airport. Namely, the County taking over operations as the sole FBO. This number is expected to increase as Reading Aviation settles into their role as the FBO at the airport. There was no forecast data available for enplanements.

<b>Reading Regional Airport/Carl A Spaatz Field Historic and Forecast Data</b>									
<b>Type</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>2030 FCST</b>	<b>2040 FCST</b>	<b>2050 FCST</b>
Total Enplanements	644	79	1,024	445	3	-99.5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Operations	30,199	31,833	37,911	40,308	46,250	53.2	51,562	53,364	55,296
Based Aircraft	97	97	115	117	115	18.6	127	147	167

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, APO Terminal Area Forecast Detail Report

The airport is part of Foreign Trade Zone #147 and has become a tourist destination as it is home to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum. The museum is home to dozens of rare aircraft and hosts a World War II Weekend since 1990 that draws more than 20,000 visitors annually.

The preservation of the airport from the encroachment of incompatible land uses is a priority for the Reading Regional Airport. Land use conditions around the airport are the primary concern. The following are examples of issues that could impact service.

- Tall structures such as buildings, cell towers, power lines, wind turbine towers, trees and other vegetation.
- Visual obstructions such as dust, glare, smoke and steam and equipment that can cause electronic interference such as cell towers and power grids.
- Sites that attract wildlife (especially birds) like surface waters, wetlands, and landfills.
- Developed land. Developed land puts more people on the ground in the path of the aircraft in case of an emergency landing or crash. Keeping land undeveloped around the airport can potentially reduce the amount of aircraft damage and enhance the survivability for the occupants of an aircraft forced to make an emergency landing away from one of the airport's runways.

As we enter 2026, the RRAA continues to implement its Strategic Plan and move forward with its business plan to grow the airport into a world class facility offering flight training, charter operations and aircraft maintenance. The RRAA will work closely with the County of Berks and the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance to further this goal as they proceed into the future. Moving forward, the Reading Regional Airport Authority will continually prepare for the future of aviation. With the prevalence of uncrewed aviation systems such as UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing), and EVTOL (Electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing) aircraft for both passenger and cargo operations, the Reading Regional Airport is uniquely positioned to support the future of advanced air mobility.

Helicopters serve the Vertical Flight (VF) needs in Berks County. Helicopters operate within a radius of approximately 100 to 150 miles. Since helicopters operate at lower airspeeds and different flight profiles than fixed-wing aircraft, they are assigned to routes away from fixed-wing arrival and departure flows, preventing slow-flying helicopters from delaying faster fixed-wing aircraft. While the County's heliports are largely privately owned, there are three hospital heliports. State and Federal agencies require hospitals to have helipads in order to obtain certification as trauma facilities. These helipads, typically located in close proximity to the respective hospital's emergency room, are a mix of both rooftop and ground level operations.

The following charts and map show the 9 airports and 7 heliports in Berks County and where available, their based aircraft.

<b>Berks County Airports</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Based Aircraft - 2024</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Surface Type</b>
Reading Regional Airport (RDG)	Bern	133	Public	Asphalt
Grimes Airport (8N1)	Bethel	32	Public	Grass
Don's Place Airpark	Perry	1	Private	Grass
Cuatro Vientos Airport	Albany	N/A	Private	Grass
The Old Commonwealth Aerodrome	Upper Bern	1	Private	Grass
Skyline Airstrip	Perry	N/A	Private	Grass
Blue Mountain Academy Private Airport	Tilden	3	Private	Grass
Area 52 Airport	Hereford	5	Private	Grass
Boyer Airport	South Heidelberg	1	Private	Grass

Source: Federal Aviation Administration and AirNav.com

<b>Berks County Heliports</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Based Aircraft - 2024</b>	<b>Use</b>
King Air Heliport	Albany	N/A	Private
Lehigh Valley Health Network Kutztown Heliport	Maxatawny	1	Private
Reading Hospital Heliport	West Reading	N/A	Private
Car Tech Heliport	Muhlenberg	N/A	Private
Metropolitan Edison Heliport	Muhlenberg	N/A	Private
St Joseph Regional Health Network Heliport	Bern	N/A	Private
GED Heliport	Exeter	1	Private

Source: Federal Aviation Administration and AirNav.com