

# Multimillion-dollar aircraft featured as thousands attend Westchester County Airport event

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The importance of Westchester County Airport to the region's business community was highlighted on June 6 when the National Business Aviation Association held a regional forum there.

The NBAA has about 11,000 corporate members and is a major nationwide force in promoting business aviation and lobbying to protect the industry. One of the airport's runways was closed for an exhibit of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of the latest corporate aircraft that had been flown in for the event. The new hangar at fixed base operator Million Air was turned into an exhibition hall where the latest aviation technology was on display and education sessions were held.



More than 2,500 people turned out for the National Business Aviation Association event on June 6 at the Westchester County Airport. Photo by Peter Katz

Airport operations continued despite the presence of several thousand visitors and hundreds of cars parked on an area of the grass between the runways and taxiways, with airport personnel and Westchester County Police handling security.

In a welcoming speech, Peter Scherrer, manager of the airport, said there are 1,900 people employed at the airport. “Most of them are full-time jobs,” he said. “They rely on business aviation, because business aviation at this airport is a lion’s share of my revenue.”

Scherrer said one corporate airplane based at Westchester creates five full-time jobs and about \$1 million in spending. “To this county, the economic impact is about \$750 million, huge for not only Westchester but for Fairfield County,” he said. “The thing is, aviation moves business and without the jet aircraft and the business aircraft we’re not doing business.”

Joan McDonald, director of operations for Westchester County, told the visitors, “We value the role aviation business and our airport play in our county both as a vibrant transportation hub and as an economic development driver.”

McDonald is familiar with the economic impact of aviation in both Westchester and Connecticut as a result of her time spent as the transportation commissioner for New York state. She said a report done by her state staff found that aviation contributed “more than

\$50 billion of annual economic activity, which equals 4.4% of the gross state product and over 400,000 jobs.” She said more than 6,300 jobs are related directly or indirectly to Westchester’s airport.

Marsha Gordon, president and CEO of The Business Council of Westchester, attended the event and told the Business Journal, “It’s the multiplier effect associated with the airport that creates activity. And just think of all the people here today that are staying in Westchester, that are coming here, that are eating here, that are staying in hotels and enjoying Westchester County and all the Hudson Valley has to offer.”



Roger Woolsey and Ed Bolen. Photo by Peter Katz

Roger Woolsey, CEO of Million Air, told the Business Journal that aviation in America is a \$1.6 trillion industry and having the event at his facility highlights what Westchester is doing right.

“We really believe that our real job is to be the first impression of the community,” he said. “When a corporation’s coming to Westchester County or New York City and they’re coming here for investments or they’re looking at a business, we want to make sure that our building, the welcoming mat, our hospitality really represents the local flavor and the quality that we have to offer in our community.”

Ed Bolen, president and CEO of the NBAA, said business airplanes are good for companies because “they allow you to turn your travel time into productive work time. They allow you to go places where other modes of transportation don’t go. They allow you to move flexibly. They allow you to move products that are too big to go in an overhead bin or are too sensitive to go in a cargo hold.”



A number of aircraft representatives flew in for the event. Photo by Peter Katz

He said NBAA holding its event at the Westchester County Airport demonstrates that “We also need our companies to be successful in a very competitive global marketplace and we need the ability for our industry to respond in times of humanitarian crises, where there are earthquakes, where there are floods, where there are wildfires in California. We need to be there to help and our country depends on that.”

While visitors to the exhibits could see demonstrations of various products, the display of business aircraft on a temporarily closed runway afforded the opportunity to examine jets, propeller planes and helicopters and visit with sales representatives before deciding whether to put down a deposit on a \$58 million Falcon 8X jet, a 19-passenger Gulfstream G650 at \$65 million or a Sikorsky S76D helicopter at \$9.9 million.

Among those at the event was Janine K. Iannarelli, an aircraft broker who operates Par Avion Ltd., an international business aircraft marketing firm specializing in the sale of pre-owned business jets such as Cessna Citations, Falcons and Hawker jets.

“My particular sweet spot is working with the entrepreneur, private individuals who had privately held companies,” she told the Business Journal. “Some of the people that I work with are going to buy the aircraft privately, yet they lead publicly traded corporations.”

She came from Houston for the event because “it is really important to reconnect with peers, to see the wares that are being offered today because technology is changing rapidly in the aviation industry, so I want to see what’s on the cutting edge.”

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