McFARLAND JOHNSON
1522 Penman Road, Suite #14 • Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
Phone: (904) 945-2233
www.mjinc.com

OCALA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
Holding Apron White Paper

The Case for Holding Aprons at OCF

Introduction

Efficient airfield operations at general aviation (GA) airports depend on the availability of infrastructure that supports both safety and throughput. Currently, Ocala International Airport (OCF) does not provide a designated run-up area for aircraft to conduct required pre-departure procedures such as engine run-ups, checklist completion, weather review, and flight plan confirmation. These activities are essential for flight safety but, without dedicated space, they are often performed on taxiways or near active movement areas, which reduces overall capacity and increases the potential for delay.

Operational Challenges

- Lack of Designated Areas: Pilots are forced to complete pre-departure procedures on active taxiways or in non-purpose-built apron areas, creating congestion points.
- Throughput Impacts: Aircraft occupying taxiways for extended run-ups delay departures and restrict sequencing flexibility for the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT).
- Safety Concerns: Performing high-power engine checks in non-designated areas introduces jet blast/prop wash risks to adjacent aircraft and ground vehicles.
- ATCT Requests: The ATCT has formally identified the need for holding aprons to reduce delay and support efficient traffic management, particularly during peak periods of GA activity.
- Flight School Congestion: OCF has experienced a prolific increase in flight school activity, with instances of four or more training aircraft simultaneously waiting on the taxiway, effectively blocking access and compounding delay issues.

Proposed Solution

To address these operational challenges, OCF proposes the construction of one new holding apron along the south end of Taxiway A. The apron will be designed to accommodate up to three A/B-I category aircraft simultaneously, providing needed capacity for the current and forecasted level of GA demand. Locating the apron adjacent to Taxiway A will allow efficient access to the runway environment while keeping extended run-up procedures out of primary taxi flows.

Benefits of Dedicated Holding Aprons

- Operational Efficiency: Relocates time-intensive run-up procedures away from high-demand taxiways, reducing bottlenecks.

- Enhanced Safety: Provides controlled space for high-power engine testing, protecting nearby aircraft, personnel, and facilities.
- ATCT Support: Aligns with ATCT requests to streamline sequencing and improve capacity management.
- Future Growth: Positions the airport to handle increasing GA demand without compromising service levels or safety.
- The ongoing Airport Master Plan process identified the holding apron as a critical need for capacity to reduce delay, emphasizing its importance to the efficient operation of the airport. OCF is pursuing this improvement immediately to maintain operational efficiency and safety.

Conclusion

The addition of two designated holding aprons at OCF represents a targeted, high-value infrastructure improvement. By addressing ATCT concerns, improving safety, and reducing delay, the aprons will directly support the airport's ability to accommodate high daily throughput and future growth in GA operations.