

NEW ANALYSIS FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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New Report Does A Deep Dive Into the High-Flying Excesses at Hanscom and Costs of Expansion

Analysis Questions Hanscom's 300% Private Jet Expansion

Boston, MA – A new report from the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) documents that Hanscom Field, New England's busiest airport for private jets, serves mainly wealthy travelers who fly to luxury destinations for short trips, emitting tons of carbon and worsening the climate crisis. The report, "[Hanscom High Flyers: Private Jet Excess Doesn't Justify Airport Expansion](#)," urges regulators to reject a proposal to expand the airport and calls for higher taxes on private jet flights and fuel.

The report is based on a comprehensive analysis of 18 months of recent flight data from Hanscom Airfield, which is currently under review for a major expansion that would triple its private jet capacity. IPS's report finds that, based on current use, the expansion would primarily serve the wealthiest travelers in the region, who take short hop flights – under an hour – to an indefensible percentage of recreational and luxury destinations.

Key findings from the [report](#) include:

- **Flight Data:** Over the period studied, we identified a substantial sample of 31,599 flights in and out of Hanscom Field as private jets with 2,915 unique flight identification registrations. Departures from Hanscom went to 761 unique destinations. Over 18 months, private jets accounted for an estimated **106,676 tons** of carbon emissions.
- **Luxury Destinations:** We estimate **half (49 percent) of these flights head to luxury or vacation destinations at 212 airports/locations**. Over 42 percent of Hanscom flights depart on weekends, implying additional recreational use.
- **Short Flights:** An estimated **41 percent of private jet flight departures (6,531) are less than one hour in duration**, with 14 percent less than 30 minutes. Because jets burn the most fuel on take-off, short-hop flights are the least energy efficient compared to alternatives. 81 percent of flights departing from Hanscom are under 3 hours duration.
- **Frequent Flyers:** The 20 most frequent private jet users at Hanscom field took 3,240 flights, both arrivals and departures. These 20 aircraft account for over 10 percent of all Hanscom private jet flights during the 18 months we studied and 14 percent of total emissions. These 20 frequent flyers burned an estimated 14,930 tons of carbon

emissions during this period. For comparison's sake, the average Massachusetts resident burns 8 tons per year in total emissions for everything. The global average is 4 tons per person.

“It is not worth blowing off a ‘carbon bomb’ of emissions -in the form of tripling the private jet capacity of Hanscom – to enable a handful of multi-millionaires and billionaires to jet to New York or Nantucket rather than take the train or ferry,” explained **Chuck Collins**, director of the Project on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies and a co-author of the report. “After a summer of disruptive weather events supercharged by climate change, it’s time to reassess our region’s infrastructure priorities.”

“We suspect that this is the tip of the private jet luxury excess iceberg,” added **Collins**. “Private jet owners and operators can request that the FAA exclude their jets from public tracking registries, making it impossible for researchers to include this data. Four Boston area billionaires, Robert Kraft, Jim Davis, John Henry and Paul Fireman have all requested their travel data go dark.”

Hanscom’s “High Flyers” – those in the top 20 private jet travelers – include:

John Fish: Suffolk Construction magnate with an estimated wealth of \$1.2 billion, Fish’s jet was the number three most frequent flier out of Hanscom but the number one carbon emitter over 18 months, burning an estimated 2,329 tons of carbon emissions, including 44 round trip flights to West Palm Beach and flights to Aruba, Aspen, and Barcelona.

John Childs: Private equity investor Child is the number 5 most frequent flier out of Hanscom but the third largest carbon emitter, with an estimated 1,407 tons. Child’s jet makes frequent trips to Vero Beach, FL, where he owns a home, and Rosario, Argentina, where he is part owner of a bird-hunting lodge. In the last eighteen months, the jet has also traveled to Palermo, Italy, the US Virgin Islands, Palm Springs, CA, and the Hamptons.

Arthur S. Demoulas: Arthur S. Demoulas, with wealth estimated at \$1.3 billion, is famous for his unsuccessful attempt to oust his cousin, Arthur T. Demoulas, from the leadership of Market Basket. The private jet registered in Arthur S. is the 10th biggest frequent Hanscom flier, with flights to Aspen, Key West, and London and total estimated emissions of 741 tons.

Charlesbank Partners: Seven of the top 20 Hanscom users are jets owned or connected to private equity firms based in the Boston area. Charlesbank Partners owns three of the twenty frequent flying jets, including the #1, #8 and #12th most frequent flyers, with a combined 676 flights emitting an estimated 2,701 tons of carbon. The number #1 frequent flier at Hanscom took a whopping 387 flights in an 18 month period, including 112 flights to and from Nantucket. All three jets made a combined 159 flights to and from Teterboro airport outside New York City, a destination with many other excellent transportation alternatives. Not only is Charlesbank our number #1 Hanscom carbon polluter, they are also a major investor in fossil fuel projects, including a \$220 million acquisition of Crosstex Energy, a major natural gas operation in the

Southwest, as well as companies involved in gas pipeline construction in the Canadian “tar sands.”

“The ‘High Flyers’ soaring above Hanscom Airfield in private jets epitomize the growing gap between the haves and have-nots,” explained **Omar Ocampo**, a researcher with the Project on Inequality and the Common Good at IPS and a co-author of the report. “The concentration of short-hop and luxury flights at Hanscom Airfield not only exacerbates inequality but also imposes a collective burden on the environment. The proposed expansion of Hanscom Airfield would only fuel this trend.”

Among other measures, the report recommends:

- Stop private jet expansion at Hanscom and Logan airports
- Prevent jet owners from “opting out” of public flight registries so the public and policy makers can understand the real impact.
- Eliminate the MA Aviation Sales tax exemption
- Increase excise tax on jet fuel and invest in green transit

“Our report reveals that our Hanscom Field is dominated by ‘High Flyers’ jetting off to luxury destinations, a privilege of the few but a burden for all. The proposed expansion of Hanscom Airfield only exacerbates this trend,” added Ocampo..

“Our findings shed light on the stark disparities in air travel and the negative consequences luxury private jet flights have on society and the climate,” Collins added. “The ‘High Flyers’ at Hanscom Airfield epitomize an unjust and unsustainable allocation of resources. Short luxury flights on private jets only benefit a select few while imposing an ecological and financial burden on the broader community. The proposed expansion of Hanscom Airfield would only exacerbate this trend, serving the interests of a privileged few at everyone else's expense.”

Read the full report: <https://ips-dc.org/report-hanscom-high-flyers>

For nationwide stats on private jet travel: IPS previously released a [report](#) in May that examines nationwide data and exposes how private jet travel costs ordinary families money and exacerbates the climate crisis. "[High Flyers 2023](#)" found that private jets make up approximately 1 out of every 6 flights handled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but contribute just 2 percent of the taxes that make up the trust fund that primarily funds the FAA. Private jets also emit at least 10 times more pollutants than commercial planes per passenger.

To speak with the co-authors of the report for an interview or further comment, contact IPS Deputy Communications Director Olivia Alperstein at (202) 704-9011 or olivia@ips-dc.org.

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