

A Personal Example

Admittedly, I may not be a typical general aviation pilot. For the last 35 years, I have averaged 150-200 hours per year exclusively for transportation, first in a Cessna 172, then a Mooney 201 and finally in two V-tail Bonanzas. My mission profile matches the optimum one discussed in this article's main text. The last two years make good case studies.

In 2012, I flew 173.7 hours while I tallied 164.2 hours in 2011. In both years, most of these hours were flown on just four or five multi-stop trips in which I was away from home for as long as a month on each trip. Most of the travel supported my aviation consulting activity as I visited clients and potential clients, attended aviation conventions, met with FAA and NTSB officials, and conducted related activity. Some of the travel supported research activity for my historical novels and other books. (If you read the available *Beyond Ultra* or the upcoming *Valhalla Revealed* and then *Blue Airways*, please remember the airplane was essential to their research, writing and publishing.)

The locations for all this work demanded a general aviation airplane. If you ever try to create an airline itinerary from Burns, Ore., to Richfield, Utah; or Buckhannon, W.V., to Duluth, Minn., or Scott City, Kan., to Big Timber, Mon., all I can say is good luck.

You also should be prepared to pay the price. Although both 2011 and 2012 were expensive years for my Bonanza as 30-year "mid-life" maintenance items came due, the airlines would have been more costly. I always compare the price of both options. In 2012, the Bonanza cost me \$31,134 to operate but airline fares would have totaled \$33,030 to reach the 52 locations I needed to visit. It was even more dramatic in 2011: The Bonanza cost \$27,717 to operate but the airlines would have cost \$38,246 to visit the 44 locations where I had business. Since I or my clients are constantly changing schedules, I usually would be forced to book more expensive refundable-fare tickets. In addition, most airline service to these communities, such as it is, tends to be expensive anyway. I usually travel alone, but on the occasions when my co-author travelled with me, the airline costs would have really mounted up.

It always mystifies me that the general aviation industry doesn't capitalize on these kinds of issues to promote the utility of single-engine piston aircraft. Cirrus seems to be one manufacturer that gets it but the main issue is that our training and operating paradigm is not in sync with the available technology.

