

Figure 4-4: FAA Forecast 1999-2010

Pilot Group	Annual Growth Rate
Student	2.3%
Private	1.6%
Commercial	0.5%
Airline transport	1.5%

Source: FAA.

4.3.3 Based Aircraft

4.3.3.1 Recent Trends in Based Aircraft

Between 1989 and 1994 the number of general aviation aircraft in the United States declined, falling from just over 205,000 aircraft in 1988 to 170,600 in 1994. Following 1994, however, the industry executed a major turnaround. By 1999, the number of general aviation aircraft had regained all the losses of the previous five years, reaching a high of 206,530 aircraft in 1999.

Figure 4-5: General Aviation Fleet Growth

	1989	1994	1999	% Change from 1989
Active General Aviation Aircraft	205,000	170,600	206,530	0.7

Source: FAA.

A primary reason for this turnaround was the tort reform law passed by Congress in the early part of the decade. Before the enactment of this law, general aviation manufacturers were liable for defects in aircraft for the life of the aircraft. The problem with this was that a major share of the fleet was more than 20 years old, and manufacturers were being sued for millions of dollars of damages any time an airplane crashed. The resulting cost of insurance led many manufacturers into bankruptcy, and the production of new single-engine airplanes ground to a halt. Tort reform limited the liability to 18 years, which was enough to re-invigorate the industry, and bring new aircraft to the market.

In Washington State, there are substantially more aircraft per capita than there are in the rest of the country. The national average is 72.3 aircraft per 100,000 people, but in Washington the average is over 50% higher than that, with 112.1 aircraft per 100,000 people. In the four-county PSRC region, this ratio is even higher, with 114.9 aircraft per 100,000 people.