Microsoft Flight

Phil ('Ferrari308guy')
BVA Administration Team

Given the release of Microsoft Flight on 29 February 2012, Boston Virtual ATC would like to release the following statement regarding its opinion of the program and hopefully set to rest any questions regarding the feasibility of the community upgrading to this new platform:

Currently, Boston Virtual ATC does not consider Microsoft Flight to be any sort of upgrade or 'next version' of Flight Simulator X, but rather a totally separate product that is more of a game, based on completing missions and earning points, rather than a simulation. Because of this significant difference, Boston Virtual ATC does not believe there will be a mass transfer of players from Flight Simulator X to Microsoft Flight such as was seen when the vast majority of Flight Simulator users upgraded from Flight Simulator 2004 to Flight Simulator X when that version was released in 2006. Based on the information released by Microsoft thus far, the initial release of Flight, which will be available for download free of charge, will only include the Big Island of Hawaii and a few basic aircraft. Additional products, such as the remainder of the Hawaiian Islands and add-on aircraft, will be available for download using points that first must be purchased from the Microsoft Live website. There has been no indication by Microsoft that the entire world will ever be simulated the way it is in Flight Simulator X.

Most importantly, to our knowledge, Microsoft Flight does not provide a multiplayer environment that would be capable of supporting air traffic control. With the core of Boston Virtual ATC based upon Flight Simulator X's ability to allow users to act as air traffic controllers in multiplayer settings, there would be no way for the community to continue functioning in its current form if it upgraded to Microsoft Flight.

Additionally, Microsoft Flight provides no support for third party developers. Add-ons for Flight Simulator X will not be compatible for Microsoft Flight, and Microsoft has stated that any possible additions to Flight will be strictly regulated through the program's online marketplace. Therefore, there is little to no possibility that add-ons from today's well-known developers will ever come to life in Microsoft Flight. Some companies, such as PMDG, have already released statements declaring that they have no intention of developing products for Microsoft Flight and there are currently no payware developers we are aware of that have announced their intentions to support the platform. With only one island and two aircraft included in the initial release and no viable add-ons on the horizon, Microsoft Flight would not be able to support the diverse range of aircraft and other add-ons that help enrich the simulation experience that we believe our members come to BVA to enjoy.

Microsoft has also stated that no software development kit will be made available for Flight, preventing the creation of any user-created content. Therefore, even if Boston Virtual ATC did upgrade to Microsoft Flight, it would be impossible for us to modify FlightDesk and Live ATIS to be compatible with the new environment as well as continue to develop scenery upgrades for airports featured in our events.

In conclusion, Boston Virtual ATC does not see Microsoft Flight as a viable platform that would be capable of supporting our community and we are happy with the multiplayer environment Flight Simulator X has provided us. Over the past six years, we have learned to work with this platform and are proud to have the ability to provide our members with a stable server connection, simulator add-ons, customized software, and so much more. Upgrading to Microsoft Flight would inhibit our ability to continue to provide our members with these services and therefore prevent us from offering the most realistic level of simulation possible.

Unless Microsoft significantly changes the direction that they are currently taking with Flight, we do not see Boston Virtual ATC leaving Flight Simulator X for any other simulation platform in the near future.

As always, if you have any questions or comments regarding Boston Virtual ATC's stance on Microsoft Flight, we encourage you to send us an email via the Contact Us page of our website. Additionally, if you'd like to join in on the discussion publicly, see the conversation currently taking place on our forums, located HERE.

Sincerely,
Boston Virtual ATC Administration Team

Regional Circuit

Tuesday, March 5
(8-11pm ET)

**KSEA (Seattle) &
KGEG (Spokane)**

Our controllers fully staff two airports and provide complete ATC coverage for flights between the two; pilots are encouraged to file preferred routes and can expect multiple handoffs and busy frequencies throughout the event

Pack the Pattern

Monday, March 19
(8-10pm ET)

KLIT (Little Rock)

Pilots are encouraged to fly into the event or fly IFR or VFR circuits of a busy Class Bravo airport, with full ATC coverage for the entire evening (including Clearance, Ground, multiple Tower and Approach controllers, and maybe even a Center!)

European Tour

To Be Determined

We're taking our popular Regional Circuit concept across the pond to Europe! Our controllers will fully staff two airports 70-200nm apart. Pilots are encouraged to fly between the two airports and enjoy full ATC coverage gate-to-gate.

Domestic Journey

Monday, March 26
(8-11pm ET)

**CYYZ (Toronto) &
KORD (Chicago)**

The Domestic Journey provides BVA pilots with the opportunity to enjoy medium-haul flights across North America with air traffic control coverage from gate-to-gate.

Fly-In

Wednesday, March 7
(8-11pm ET)

**Cape Cod
(KACK, KHYA, KMVY, KEWB)**

Tower (Local) Controllers will feature several small airports designed for General Aviation aircraft. Fly IFR or VFR within controlled airspace; general aviation aircraft (anything from a Cessna to a LearJet) are preferred.

Getaway

April 20-May 4

**California
(Week 1: Norcal,
Week 2: Socal)**

BVA's Getaway Event takes pilots and controllers for a change of scenery, and features various airports across North America. Join BVA as we 'Getaway' to explore new airports and destinations

Controller of the Month

Evan ('evanet')
BVA Administration Team

Each month, one member of our controller community is selected by ATC Instructors for special recognition for outstanding performance and ongoing dedication. As essential frontline service providers, controllers play the most important role in ensuring the satisfaction and enjoyment of our membership.

Our ATC Instructors are proud to recognize **Domenic (leadbottom1)** for a second time as a result of his continuous efforts on ZBW and other positions in the absence of a few of our other controllers. As one of the most senior BVA members, Domenic has also been a consistently excellent controller, displaying a positive attitude toward pilots and working well with other controllers.

Cape Air Virtual >>
Pilot of the Month

Each month, Cape Air Virtual recognizes the pilot who has the most hours for the airline. For February, that pilot is Bill ('braines1'), who has flown a total of 21.3 hours! Congratulations Bill!

BVA Member Survey Analysis: Live ATIS Responses

Phil ('Ferrari308guy')
BVA Administration Team

I want to thank those of you who took the time to provide feedback for BVA's most recent member survey. While the survey did take a good 15 minutes out of your day, it provided me as well as other administrators of the community with valuable feedback that we will be able to use to help improve your experience here. While the A-Team continues to review and analyze different parts of the survey, I had a chance to look specifically at the Live ATIS section. Additional survey analysis will be released to the community over the next few months.

The survey shed some light on things that are and are not going well with Live ATIS. While a good portion of the responses are what I expected, there are a few trends that I was surprised to see. Clearly these unexpected results reveal things that I need to improve, and I want to take the time to respond to some of the most frequent issues that appeared, as I am responsible for supporting the program. Because all of the responses on the survey are confidential, I am only able to address the more general statements made by members rather than respond to individual messages.

1. Live ATIS doesn't work at all / only works half the time / sort of works if it's a good day, so I don't use it.
Live ATIS' beta period lasted over a year and I worked very hard to ensure it was a stable program before release. Obviously, I was disappointed to read that the program is not as stable for the general user base as I thought, as it shows that I have missed several corner cases. That being said, the reason why I assumed Live ATIS' stability is because I have received less than 5 emails reporting problems to me since the release of V1.0.1.0. I want to stress to everyone who is experiencing difficulties with Live ATIS: **IF I DON'T KNOW THERE IS A PROBLEM, I CAN'T FIX IT.** If you have neglected to send me an email about an issue with Live ATIS because you figure someone else will do it, then your issue has probably not been, and probably never will be fixed. Please, *please,* **PLEASE** let me know about the bugs that you encounter so that I can make your experience with Live ATIS better. So, if one of your responses about Live ATIS in the survey pertained to the program not working properly, then send me an email at philc@bostonvirtualatc.com so we can work together to rectify the issue.

2. Live ATIS should be integrated with FlightDesk.
Bill and I have discussed this possibility several times over the past few years. Unfortunately, due to the way the programs have been coded, integration between Live ATIS and FlightDesk is not easy to accomplish and I do not see this improvement on the horizon as of now.
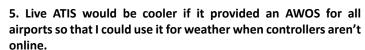
3. Live ATIS is annoying because I have to switch task windows from FSX to use it / is not user friendly / is difficult to operate / is confusing, so I don't use it.
My initial response to this statement is: do you have the program configured properly? If not, then yes, I would agree using Live ATIS is annoying to use because you are making life hard on yourself by doing things manually. Live ATIS comes with several options that make the program easy to use. So easy to use, in fact, that Live ATIS requires not a single mouse click from the user in order to hear an ATIS recording in FSX, if you choose to configure the program that way. In order to learn how to configure Live ATIS to your liking, read the 'Options' section of the program's user guide, which is available by clicking your computer's Start Menu > Live ATIS > User Guide.

4. There is not enough information available about Live ATIS, so I don't know how to use it or where to get help.
Live ATIS comes with a 10 page user guide that explains how to use the program, how to configure it to your liking, as well as a few other tips and tricks. If you're confused about how Live ATIS works or what to do after you've installed it, then the user guide is where you need to look. It can be accessed by clicking your computer's Start Menu > Live ATIS > User Guide. If you have read the user guide and continue to find yourself confused, then please send me an email at philc@bostonvirtualatc.com so I can help you out. If something in the user guide doesn't make sense to you, or there's something that the user guide doesn't explain at all, then I need to know so I can fix it and help solve this ambiguity for future users.

5. Live ATIS would be cooler if it provided an AWOS for all airports so that I could use it for weather when controllers aren't online.
Indeed, it would be awesome if Live ATIS had an AWOS available for any airport at any time. This improvement is on the list for version 2. While I can't make any guarantees, I'll see what I can do to make this a reality.

6. Live ATIS should have a text to speech function and .mp3 capability to allow me more flexibility when making ATIS recordings.
This request came from mostly controllers, and rightly so, as I understand their plight to find 30 free seconds on the frequency to record an ATIS. Again, I can't promise anything, but this improvement is also on the list for version 2.

I hope these responses prove useful to those of you who submitted feedback regarding Live ATIS. As always, please feel free to send me an email at philc@bostonvirtualatc.com if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

FSX Add-On Reviews Forum

Tom ('Tom_G_2010')
Guest Writer

In late February, a new FSX Add-On Reviews forum was created on the BVA website in order to allow our current membership to share and get advice for the multitude of third party add-ons that are now available to FSX users.

If you are on the fence about purchasing a particular aircraft, scenery enhancement, or other add-on, or if you just want to spread the news about a great product you recently purchased, the FSX Add-On Reviews forum is the place to go. Feel free to review any type of product: aircraft, scenery, terrain mesh, weather applications, system utilities, even computer hardware—it all goes! Also, if you find that somebody has already reviewed a product that you own, we encourage you to reply to the original review and add your own personal feedback should you have additional information or feel that the original reviewer missed some important aspects of the product.

However, before you begin posting reviews, please take a look at the basic forum guidelines, as they contain some important information, such as a review template that all contributors must adhere to. Additionally, we ask that reviews try to maintain a candid and unbiased opinion in order for the review to be of as much value to our members as possible. No add-on is perfect, so give some thought as to the add-on's best features as well as its shortcomings when providing your opinion on a product.

A couple features have been created to make the review forum as easy to use as possible, and are available in the two 'sticky' posts that are located just below the announcements header. The first is a 'Wanted List,' where users can post requests for reviews that are not yet available on the forum. The second is a complete index of all the reviews that currently available, along with a link to the corresponding post. So, if you want to stay informed about the great reviews that are being added to the forum, subscribe to the review index topic and you will receive an email each time the post is updated with a new review.

Also, while you are browsing the FSX Add-On Reviews forum, please keep in mind that all posts, including those made by BVA administrators, represent personal opinions of the original poster(s) and not those of BVA or its administration. This forum is not intended to solicit products but for BVA members to post their opinions of products they have used.

Whether you are looking for feedback on an add-on or want to share your experiences using one, be sure to visit the FSX Add-On Reviews forum. Additionally, if you have any questions or want to provide feedback about the forum itself, please send a forum private message to Tom_G_2010.

Share Your Thoughts on the European Tour

Josh ('TheNavyReapers')
BVA Administration Team

Recently, the Boston Virtual ATC Administration Team has been analyzing one of our lesser known events: The European Tour. The event, which was conducted 'Regional Circuit style,' focused on airports in Europe and was held just 4 times between July and November of 2011. The plan was to start in Britain and let the event make its way through many areas in Europe. However, after the leg from London's Heathrow to Paris' Charles-De-Gaulle, the event was halted due to a lack of participation.

We'd like to know why this event was not as popular as expected, especially since its inception was the result of several requests from members for a regular event in Europe. Recently, a thread was begun on the forums soliciting members for their thoughts, and several members offered valuable feedback. From the information we gathered, the top reasons as to why members did not participate in the European tour were: uncertainty around foreign phraseology, the difficulty of finding foreign charts and procedures, and bad timing.

While we appreciate the responses we did get, we would like to get the thoughts of an even wider range of members. So, if you have something valuable to say regarding the European Tour, please feel free to contribute to the discussion taking place HERE on the forums. Alternatively, if you do not wish your comments to be public, you can contact me at joshb@bostonvirtualatc.com.

We hope you can help us with this crucial feedback in order to ensure that BVA can continue to offer our members the best events possible.

Loading Your .PLN

FSX's default "Flight Planner" application will get you from one airport to another but doesn't usually use real-world routes or SIDs/STARs. But there's a way to create flight plan (.PLN) files for your GPS that include real-world routes. You can create flight plans online or download them from our website and import those files into FSX's GPS. Whether you choose to create your own flight plan or download a preferred route file from our website, the import process is the same.

If you want to create your own flight plan, SimRoutes.com is a great resource. Using the "Search" feature will yield inaccurate routes; the SIDs and STARs on the website also use old navigation data. The best thing to do is find a real-world route from FlightAware and enter those waypoints into SimRoute's "Generate Routes" page. If a SID or STAR is involved, you can manually enter the waypoints from the chart into SimRoutes, save/export the file using the "FSX" version, and click "Download Flightplan". Save it to to Documents\ Flight Simulator X Files.

You can also find .PLN files for all of our event preferred routes on our website (saving and installing those files works in the same way as those you might generate from SimRoutes).

To import any saved .PLN file into FSX's GPS, view the how-to instructions with images on our forums: http://forums.bostonvirtualatc.com/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=1981.