

Escape From New York: How To Get In & Out of Teterboro (2019)

Chris Shieff

4 November, 2019



There's nothing that will drain a smartphone battery quicker than a **ground delay in Teterboro**. Preflight complete, flight plan loaded, passengers onboard (they were actually on time for a change), engines started and – wait for it – you are instructed to contact “ground metering.” The word itself can make the stomach drop.

Yes, a line of thunderstorms is moving in, but it's not quite solid. Most of my route does not look affected, but far better minds than mine have determined that diverting traffic require them to **close my entry gate**, as well as most of the surrounding ones. I receive an Expect Departure Clearance Time (EDCT) of **over three and a half hours away!**



Normally I make it as far as taxiing just short of TEB's RWY 24 before the controllers present me with such a lovely ground delay and instruct me to park in the **“penalty box.”** This time I hadn't even left the chocks (I wasn't even actually supposed to

start the engines before contacting “metering”, but of course I didn’t admit that mistake to the controller).

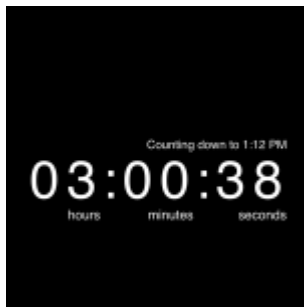
Ground delays due to weather or traffic saturation are **not uncommon in Teterboro**. We have to hand it to the Teterboro ATC staff for efficiently controlling one of the busiest GA airports in the world (about 174,000 arrivals a year). They not only deal with all the complications that come with being located under some of the most congested airspace in the world, they patiently work everyday with a bunch of A-list pilot personalities that think their schedules are more important than any delays. **Well done, you ninjas of New Jersey!**



Weather, traffic and pilots aren't the only issues they've been dealing with lately. Improvement projects have been steadily grinding along for the past year and a half. And guess what? There's even more to come!



So, after I inform my passengers of this delay, allow me to hop back up in the cockpit and let's discuss some Teterboro info with the help from our good friend Dave Belastock, President of the Teterboro User Group. Perhaps you heard him speak on the latest OpsChat, but, if not, we're going to dive in a little deeper. Oh, by the way, don't be offended while I analyze my fantasy football scores on my phone; I'm a multi-tasker, and we've got three and half hours - well three now - to go and I've got 85% battery life on my phone left.



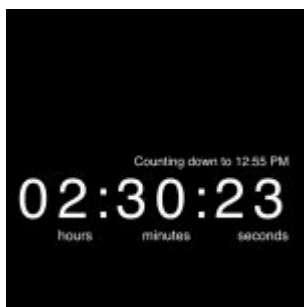
EDCT: T minus 3:00, battery 85%

The Entry

Getting into Teterboro can often be a **frustrating game**. When calling for a clearance at your departure airport, wagers can be made that an EDCT will be issued. Gone are the days in which operators would **file a nearby airport** (KMMU/Morristown, KHPN/White Plains, etc.) and change the destination to TEB enroute to avoid such ground delays. I've never tried it, but I did witness a former chief pilot broach the subject with clearance delivery at a Midwestern airport about attempting this. "If you to try that stunt, I'll route you through Florida," was the controller's response.

But getting the heads-up on delays may depend upon early filing. The FAA's Traffic Management Unit coordinates the flow programs into airports experiencing delays. According to one TMU official, "Get your flight plan filed prior to program implementation (at least a day in advance) and try not to change that proposal time. The command center 'optimizer' computer will issue releases/slots based on those times. And your flight plan won't drop out of the system until 2 hours after your EDCT."

I've had service providers tell me that **the earlier you file, the higher up you are on the departure list**. I never knew if this was true or not, but it may look like it certainly has a partial effect.



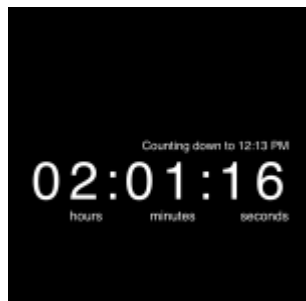
EDCT: T minus 2 hrs 30 mins, battery 67%.

Upon arrival into Teterboro, you will watch your TCAS light up like a Galactica arcade game, especially on a clear day. Glider activity near the MUGZY waypoint on the LVZ STAR to the northwest and GA traffic from multiple small airports flock below you. And the question usually comes up once you are beneath Newark's Class B airspace: **"What speed should we be going?"**

The answer is of course 200 knots. But more than once I have been angrily asked by a controller what my speed was and, after answering 200 knots, speed reductions were quickly mandated to traffic following behind me. Thus, there was a perception that NY Tracon needed you to keep your speed up into TEB. But no controller may authorize an aircraft to exceed 200kts under Class B. If it makes you feel better to report your speed reduction, be my guest. But the answer is 200kts.

Those familiar with TEB approaches understand that you must certainly be on your game and brief your approach. The ILS RWY 6, including the circle to land RWY 1, has a mandatory altitude of 1500 feet at

DANDY that **pilots are still not making** before intercepting the glide slope. The circle procedure can be tricky, especially with a tall antennae to the south of the airport. And if winds are gusty from the northwest expect turbulence from the distant hills. In 2017, a Learjet became unstable during this approach, stalled and crashed as the crew were unprepared for the approach. Early briefing and proficient monitoring will ensure a safe and simple approach.



EDCT: T minus 2 hrs, battery 50%.

Belastock mentions that a new RNAV GPS RWY 19 with LPV mins is expected to be published in December. Some aircraft flying a coupled ILS RWY 19 with the localizer captured at 2000 feet have experienced an **uncommanded climb** due to a false glide slide capture. This glide slope perturbation is triggered by aircraft moving on taxiway Q across RWY 19 and passing in front of the glide slope antennae, which briefly deflects the signal downward enough to satisfy capture parameters. Once the taxiing aircraft has cleared the glide slope critical area, the beam returns to its proper angle. If you have Approach mode armed, the autopilot may grab the temporarily deflected glide slope and then pitch up when the signal returns to normal. Close monitoring and quick action are required to prevent an altitude deviation. The GPS approach would circumnavigate this potential issue.

And speaking of that turn between UNVIL and TUGGZ to intercept the final approach course, you could very well see VFR aircraft just below you. You are outside Class D airspace at that point so separation requirements aren't necessary. While other NY area airports have communication requirements for VFR traffic transitioning near congested airspace, **TEB has none**. TUG is currently working with the FAA to create a Class D transition area to the north to require communication. Fingers crossed.



EDCT: T minus 1hr 30 mins, battery 42%.

The Escape

RWY 6-24 is going to see substantial improvement in 2020. Currently, the plan is to **close the runway several evenings through the summer**, starting the day after Memorial Day through Labor Day. "Port Authority of NY and NJ staff have worked diligently to create a schedule that would least affect operators," explained Belastock. "We are anticipating RWY 6-24 to close from 10pm Saturday nights until noon on Sundays. And then there will be two 24-hour closures beginning at 10pm Friday through Saturday night at dates to be determined."

This will inevitably switch up the normal departure procedures. Whereas the RUUDY RNAV departure (we'll

discuss good ol' RUUDY in a second) is the traditional departure, the alternative will be the DALTON 2 departure.

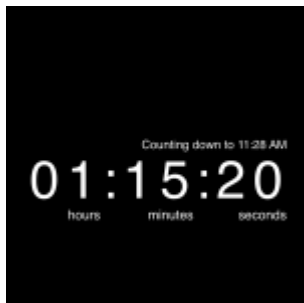
"Do you ever wonder why you have to hold short of RWY 24 for an extended period of time waiting for an IFR release?" asks Belastock. "That's because NY Tracon requires a 10nm separation between you and the overflying Newark traffic." The Dalton departure, however, is a VFR-IFR departure.

VFR? Really?

Yep, just as the instrument departure plate reads, aircraft depart VFR – 3 sm visibility and 3000' ceilings are required – and when handed over to the departure controller, the IFR flight plan is activated. Theoretically there is **no gap required** between the VFR Teterboro departures and IFR Newark arrivals. But consideration was taken between all stakeholders, and a 5nm gap between TEB and EWR traffic was agreed upon. "TEB clearance can't solicit the departure. You must request it and have a published departure plate available in the cockpit," said Belastock.

Though this could mean a reduction in release time, if there is a delay in progress controllers can only offer an **"indefinite delay"** for traffic or weather issues, whereas they can give you a set time if using the other IFR departures. "Actually, NY Tracon is encouraging it. They want pilots and controllers comfortable with it," said Belastock.

As for the RUUDY RNAV departure, good news! Pilot deviations are decreasing. Belastock and TUG worked closely with training facilities as well as OPSGROUP to get the word out. I even noticed the RUDDY departure was included in my latest recurrent simulator training. With the altitude restriction and noise abatement restrictions pilots need to be extremely situationally aware. "We don't want to tell pilots how to fly their aircraft," said Belastock. "But we need them to be fully aware of how the departure operates."



EDCT: T minus 1:15, battery 37%.

The Window of Opportunity

My eyes are burning a bit from so much screen time on my phone. I query Gate Hold again – just like the other 73 pilots that are trying to chime in. Yep, that's me you're rolling your eyes at. My EDCT time is actually extended further even though the weather is past my entry gate. "Is there anything we can do to get out of here," I reply with a frustration.

"Can you fly a final altitude of 14,000 feet?"

Confusion mixes with a sense of impending opportunity. "Standby," I answer. I always take extra fuel out of TEB, but I'm sure there cannot be enough to fly that low. I run the numbers...and, I'll be damned, we can make the destination with a safe fuel reserve.

"Actually, yes we can," I reply excitedly. "Start your engines and contact ground control," comes the reply. As I taxi past all the other waiting aircraft, I couldn't help but feel a sense of guilt...and some pleasure as well.

We departed on the RUUDY departure, flew west while climbing to 14,000 feet talking to NY Center and several approach controllers. When we were handed off to Cleveland Center, we requested a more appropriate cruising altitude and given it without question.

I later called TEB tower to see how this “gift” actually occurred. “It doesn’t happen often. But since your entry gate and route were getting so saturated with diverting traffic, you couldn’t fly it at your filed altitude. But this wasn’t the case for the lower altitudes,” explained the controller. **“I can’t offer it unless you specifically ask.”** But even then it probably won’t be granted.”

I’ve been flying in and out of TEB for 15 years, and I’m still often learning new details about its operation. Perhaps I’ll keep this tool in my back pocket for the next great escape.

