



Why Choose a Sonex?

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Deciding to build an airplane is an incredibly detailed, personal decision open to all kinds of skepticism and critique by the local airport bums. Believe me, I know. The RV crowd couldn't believe I hadn't chosen Van's (everyone else does, why not me?), the Zenith crowd couldn't believe I hadn't gone that route, and the fast glass group just shook their heads at me. I am always one to choose my own path, never follow the crowd, so their comments just made me smile.

In the end, I made my decision based on several basic items. First, the mission. Second, THE COST. And third, the company.

I wanted a two seat airplane, that I could build for under \$40,000 and maintain relatively affordably, and a family owned business that was reliable and likely to be around a while. The family owned part is important to me, personally, as I grew up with one in my family, and to this day go out of my way to buy local at family owned businesses.

I had previously owned a Cessna 150 and a Piper Cherokee (at the same time for a brief period - not recommended for the faint of heart!). As much as I loved the extra seats in the Cherokee, and the IFR equipped panel (I got my instrument rating in the Cherokee), I rarely used either. The 150 was a blast to fly, pretty cheap, but the maintenance on a 40 plus year old airplane was an ongoing issue, and an expensive one at that.

Most of my flights are local, off to a fly-in or lunch. I usually took my son, and occasionally both my son and my wife. I love long cross country flights, and certainly plan some when I finish the kit, but that is not the primary mission I fly. I fly for fun, usually around Chicagoland and Southern Wisconsin. Speed is not a big concern to me.

When I looked at kits initially, the only ones with three or four seats made item number two (THE COST) a serious concern. The Murphy Rebel was a viable alternative with three seats, but importing the kit added to both the total price and the hassle. Vans RV-10 had just come out as I made my decision, but the completion price was out of my league. Way out of my league.

Zenith was affordable, but their reputation had been tarnished by a series of wing failures. RANS had cool airplanes if you like tube and fabric, and they fit the mission and cost. But their tech support had, at the time (about 2003 - 2005), a bit of a reputation for not being responsive. And RANS was exactly what I liked - but the tandem seating was not what I wanted with my son.



I kept coming back to Sonex - the mission fit, THE COST was right on the mark, and the company is family owned, established, and well run. Better yet, the plans made it obvious that, if the worst happened and Sonex Aircraft LLC disappeared, it was likely I could complete the kit. The Sonex community was friendly, and the technical support appeared to be excellent. It didn't hurt that I grew up with a Sonerai II in the garage...

So, I spent a few AirVenture's asking lots of questions of manufacturers, builders, owners, and pilots. I had lots of brochures, a spreadsheet, and a good idea of what would and would not fit the budget. I talked to a lot of Van's builders, and few, if any, had completed an airplane for under \$50,000. Doing so required a well-used, high-time certified engine, and no fast-build options. Zenith airplanes interested me, but those wing failures....

As I ran the numbers, only Sonex had a solid grasp on the actual cost of completion (and even they did not mention the part about rework, which personally I added 10% for). Their numbers met my needs and expectations, and when I ran them on my own, they seemed accurate. No other manufacturer, in my opinion, had a cost analysis as accurate as Sonex.

In the end, it was a conversation with Jeremy Monnett at Oshkosh one year that sold me. I don't remember the specifics - I do remember walking away feeling as if I met someone I could trust, and who has good business skills and a great product. Sonex Aircraft LLC seemed to me as if they got it right, and was likely to be around for the duration of my build, and then some.

I am currently two years in to a build of a Sonex taildragger, and it will be AeroVee powered.

So, if you are trying to decide what manufacturer to choose, and what model, I can understand. All I can say is it is a very personal decision, with lots of choices and many options in each choice. Ultimately the decision is yours, and I can only share my experience.

But I will say this - the more I deal with Sonex Aircraft LLC, the more I like the company. I feel I made the best decision for me and would buy another Sonex if I were making the decision again now.

Blue skies and happy building!

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