

Creating VIP Parking for Commercial Airlines in FS2004

An Illustrated Guide

compiled by
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The question has been asked many, many times: Is it possible to have ATC direct the aircraft I am flying to a specific gate – preferably one in the same area as other aircraft from the same airline?

The answer is a “qualified” yes.

You cannot jump into just any aircraft and fly to just any airport and expect ATC to know what you are flying and how to direct you when you land. That would be a wonderful feature but it is not possible in FS2004

But you **can** set up one **specific** aircraft (presumably your favorite), and then create a “reserved” parking space at virtually any airport which has sufficient parking space. When properly set up, ATC **will** direct you to that reserved (VIP) parking space.

I live near Dallas, Texas, the home of Southwest Airlines so this Guide will be using the default Boeing 737-400 (mine is in a nice Southwest Airlines livery) for the specific aircraft and KDAL (Love Field) as the airport where a VIP parking spot will be created.

For testing this concept, I also created VIP parking at Houston-Hobby (KHOU), Oklahoma City (KOKC), Amarillo (KAMA), Tulsa (KTUL), Little Rock (KLIT), Midland (KMAF), El Paso (KELP), New Orleans (KMSY) and Corpus Christi (KCRP) – all destinations which Southwest flies.

I have third party enhancements installed for the above airports but the premise will work for default airports if there is sufficient parking.

Before proceeding, I think it is only right and proper to give credit to Jim Vile and Reggie Fields for their insights regarding what can and cannot be done with ATC and FS2004. Much of what I am about to outline is the direct result of their efforts. That of course is only one small part of the contributions these gentlemen have made to our common hobby / addiction.

Mr. Lee Swordy also deserves special mention for his indispensable AFCAD program which we will use to create the setup in this guide.

Thanks to all.

The concept is quite simple: Basically, ATC directs traffic based on matching the **radius** of the aircraft to the **radius** of available parking spaces.

If the radius of the aircraft you are flying is **unique**, and matches a **unique** parking spot radius, that is where ATC will direct your aircraft and no other aircraft will use that spot. That unique parking spot will always be reserved for you.

The first step is to setup your favorite aircraft with a unique radius.

This guide will be using the default B737-400 but the method could be applied to virtually any other aircraft.

1. Navigate to your b737-400 folder and using Notepad, open the aircraft.cfg file.
2. Select the variation (paint) you wish to use.

Note: If selecting a variation which might also be used as an AI aircraft in a Traffic file, make a Copy of that variation and add it as the next [fltsim.?] number. Then change the title= line in that new entry to something unique like title=Boeing 737-400 X so the Traffic file will not use this variation.

3. Add the following two lines to the variation you have selected:

```
atc_parking_types=GATE
atc_parking_codes=SWA      (The code will vary if not Southwest)
```

4. On the ui_type= line, add an X Example: ui_type="737-400" X

That will make it simpler to identify this aircraft in later steps.

5. Save your work. It should look something like this when you are done.

```
aircraft.cfg - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help

[fltsim.5]
title=Boeing 737-400 SWA
sim=Boeing737-400
model=Opa
panel=
sound=
texture=SWA
kb_checklists=Boeing737-400_check
kb_reference=Boeing737-400_ref
atc_id=N737SW
atc_airline=Southwest
atc_flight_number=1123
ui_manufacturer=Boeing
ui_type="737-400" X
ui_variation="Southwest Airlines"
description="One should hardly be surprised that the world's most prolific manufacturer of commercial aircraft is also the producer of the world's most popular jetliner. The 737 became the best-selling commercial jetliner worldwide when orders for it hit 1,831 in June 1987 (surpassing Boeing's own 727 as the previous champ). However, it wasn't always that way/s in the first few years of production, there were so few orders that Boeing considered canceling the program. They didn't, and the airplane has more than proven itself in over three decades of service."
atc_parking_types=GATE
atc_parking_codes=SWA
```

6. Now click on the Model folder and make a Copy of it.
7. Rename that copy Model.Opa or some other name of your choice.
Note the period between the word Model and Opa.

You should now have two Model folders; one named Model and one named Model.Opa (or whatever you called it).

8. Open the Model.Opa folder.
9. Rename the file B737_400.mdl as B737_400_Opa.mdl
10. Using Notepad, open the model.cfg file and edit it as follows:

```
[models]
normal=B737_400_Opa
```

Save your work.

You have now created a new model folder with a changed model name and a changed model.cfg file.

One last step before we leave the b737-400 folder.

11. Open the aircraft.cfg file once again and locate the variation we have been working on.

Edit the line model= line so it reads model=Opa (or what you named the new model folder).

Example:

```
[fltsim.5]
title=Boeing 737-400 SWA
sim=Boeing737-400
model=Opa
panel=
sound=
texture=SWA
```

We have done all this so that when we alter the radius of the b737-400 model, we will be altering the one in the Model.Opa folder only.

If we altered the radius in the default Model folder, all variations of the b737-400 in the b737-400 folder would use it also and that would negate the idea of only one aircraft having a unique radius.

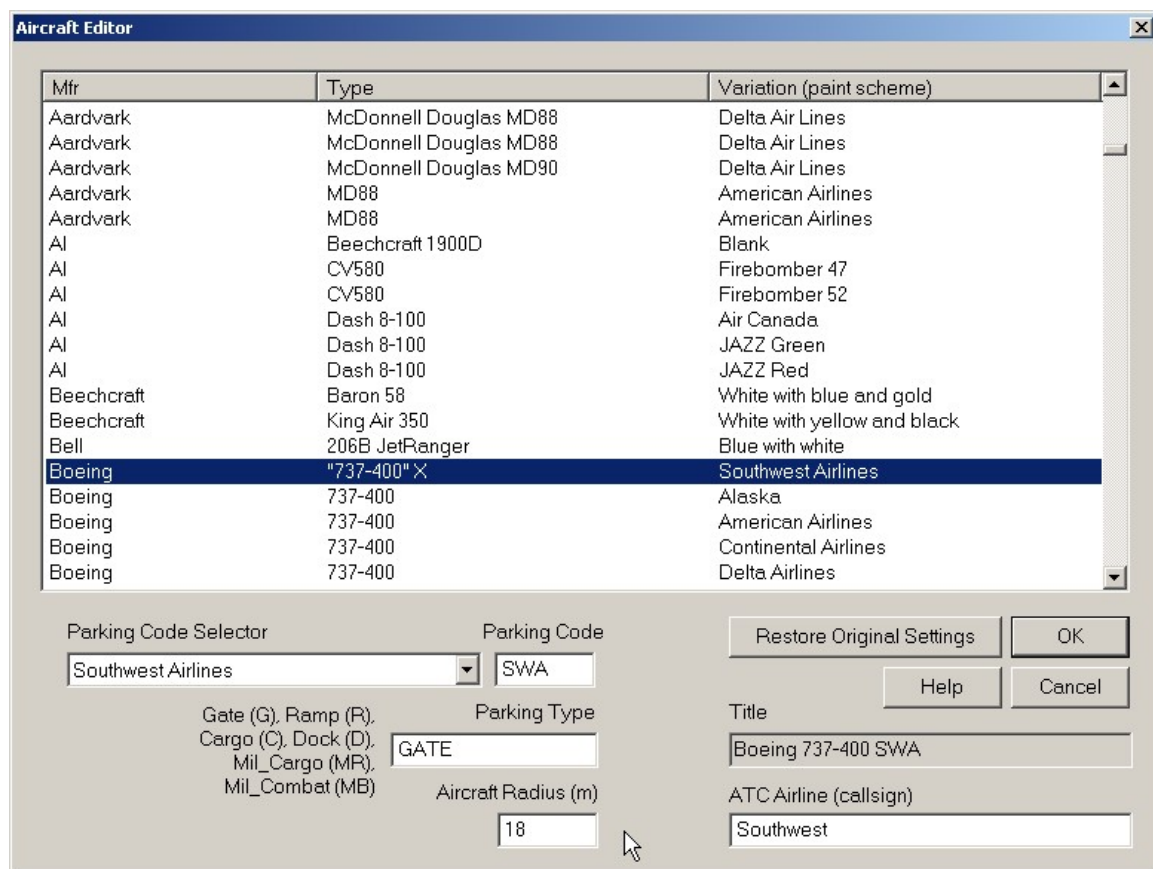
The next steps describe the procedure used to alter the radius of the model in the Model.Opa folder.

For that we use the AFCAD program by Lee Swordy.

Start your AFCAD program and from the Menu bar at the top, select Tools and then Aircraft editor.

That will display a listing of all the aircraft you have installed including AI.

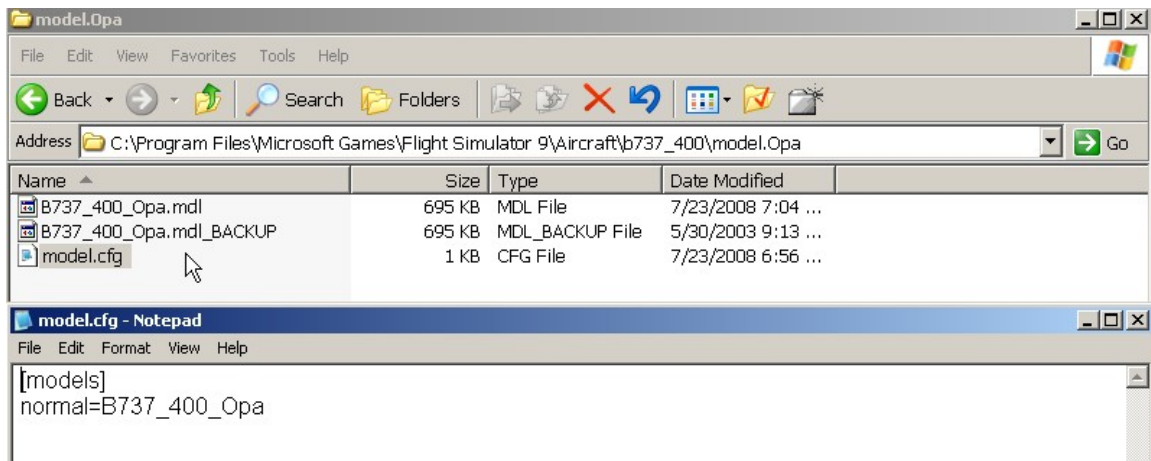
Scroll down until you find the entry which is marked with the X.



The default radius for this aircraft is 22 **meters** but we will be changing it to 18 as shown in the above screen shot.

I selected 18 as in scrolling through other entries (AI), I found one whose radius was 19 (most were 20 or 22) and wanted to be sure I made this one less.

When you hit OK, the radius will be changed in the model which is in the Model.Opa folder and a backup will be created there also.



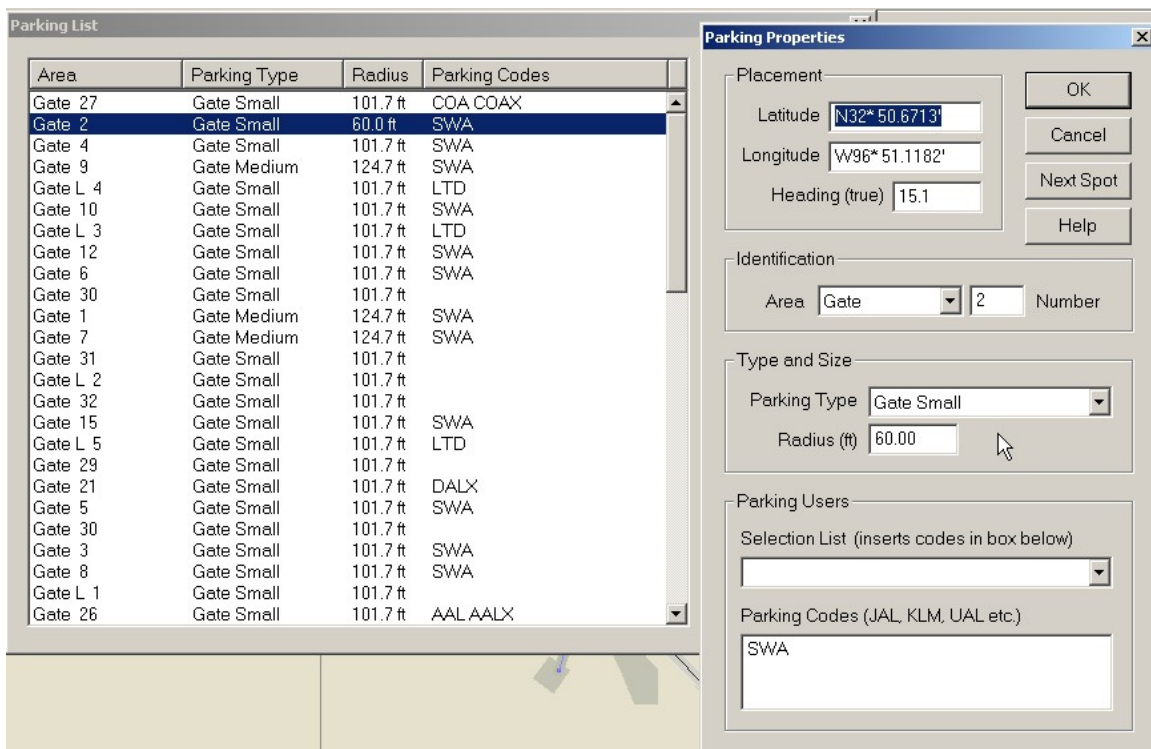
This screenshot shows the Model.Opa folder and model.cfg files open.

Note the backup file which AFCAD created when we altered the radius,

That completes the setup of our favorite aircraft which now has a unique radius.

The next steps will detail the procedure for the creation of a matching, unique parking space.

Using AFCAD again, open the airport where you want to create the reserved parking space. I used KDAL – and my third party AFCAD.



The screenshot shows that I selected Gate 2 to be my reserved gate. Whichever gate you select, write it down so you can check ATC's performance later.

Its default radius was 101.7 feet. To change it, highlight it and select Properties. That is the view you see on the right.

Change the radius to 60.

Also note that I have added the Parking code SWA which matches the code in the aircraft.cfg file.

If you do not want to bothered converting meters to feet, under the Tools Menu and Options, select the Metric Parking Radius option.

In that case the radius entry should be 18.3

Either method will work – all we are doing is making the parking radius slightly larger than the radius of the aircraft model.

If you prefer to work in feet (as I do) and are not too good at math, try using the online conversion website named OnlineConversion.com or one of the many other available conversion sites.

The screenshot shows the OnlineConversion.com website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, Search, FAQ, and Message. Below this is the site's title, "Welcome to OnlineConversion.com", and a subtitle, "Common Length and Distance Conversions". The main content area features a form for converting units. The "Convert what quantity?" field contains the number "18". Below this, there are two dropdown menus labeled "From:" and "To:". The "From:" dropdown is set to "meter", and the "To:" dropdown is set to "feet". A "Convert" button is located between the two dropdowns. Below the button, the "Result:" field displays "18 meter = 59.055 118 11 feet". A mouse cursor is pointing at the result field. At the bottom of the result field, there are links for "See Also: All Length Conversions" and "Metric Length Conversions".

The conversion result was 59.05511811 feet which I rounded up to 60.

I recommend moving the altered gate to the top of the list also – just drag it there.

Save your work and Start FS2004 to test the results. Remember to select the aircraft with the X by it's name.

A quick recap of the procedures:

1. Select the aircraft you wish to alter. Edit as detailed.
2. Create a new Model folder with a unique name.
3. Edit the radius of the model in that folder.
4. Edit (or add) a parking space at the airport(s) of your choice using the correct radius and parking code.

Note: The parking space **must** be a **GATE**, as that is what is specified in the aircraft.cfg file. (atc_parking_types=GATE)

If you followed the procedures correctly, when you are flying the aircraft whose radius you changed, and land at the airport where you created the reserved parking space, ATC should direct you properly to that spot.

As noted earlier in this document, I set up reserved parking spaces at a number of airports to which Southwest flies and was directed properly each time.

Remember this concept will only work with the aircraft you altered. If you are flying some other variation of the aircraft, ATC will direct you wherever it wishes.

My testing had AI set at 100% with both Airlines and GA enabled. I have a lot of AI aircraft of both types and ATC never placed one in any of my “reserved” spots. That is not to say it could not happen, only that it did not occur during any of my testing.

If any GA aircraft should show up in “your” spot, check to be sure the aircraft does not specify GATE in the atc_parking_types= line.

Questions and Answers

Question: Does changing the radius affect the flight dynamics of the aircraft?

Answer: No, it apparently does not affect flying in any way. The radius parameter, as coded in the model file, simply creates an invisible “shield” around the aircraft.

You see this “shield” in action when AI Planes are waiting for takeoff. It creates the spacing between the AI Plane. Because the User plane stops before running into the plane ahead of him then model radius is not that important except with the AI Planes.

Question: My favorite aircraft is a 747 – will the VIP setup work with it also?

Answer: The setup should work for any aircraft. Edit the radius as described in the guide (I use 18 meters).

Select a location at your airport(s) which is already setup to accommodate an aircraft of this size (Gate Heavy) and edit it accordingly.

Question: Will this procedure work with FSX?

Answer: I have tested this concept with FS2004 **only**. I assume the idea (in one form or another) can be applied to FSX but I have no way to test it.

Question: Can I have more than one VIP spot at an airport?

Answer: My testing indicates that you probably cannot. The results were only consistent when there was one such reserved spot.

Feel free to experiment with the concept – perhaps you will discover something I have overlooked.

I hope you have as much fun experimenting with this idea as I have.

Questions and/or Constructive Comments may be directed to:

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