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BUSINESS AVIATION, AIRPORT MARKETING KEY TOPICS AT TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE

By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

Spreading the word about the importance of business aviation and airport marketing were key topics at the 2014 Texas Aviation Conference. This year's conference had over 500 attendees, and for the first time in its 32-year history, was held in Dallas. Conference participants included airport sponsors, TxDOT employees, consultants, contractors and exhibitors.

This year's conference was dedicated to the memory of Henry Ogradzinski, who passed away on January 22 after a lengthy battle with cancer. "Henry O.," as friends and colleagues knew him, served as the president of the National Association of State Aviation Officials and was known for his charismatic and informative updates on critical issues facing general aviation.



A record crowd attended the 2014 Texas Aviation Conference.

TxDOT Aviation Division (AVN) Director David Fulton began the conference by welcoming the attendees and then delivering his state of the aviation division address. "This is my favorite event of the year," said Fulton. "It's a joy that we can get together

continued on pg. 3

DAVE'S HANGAR



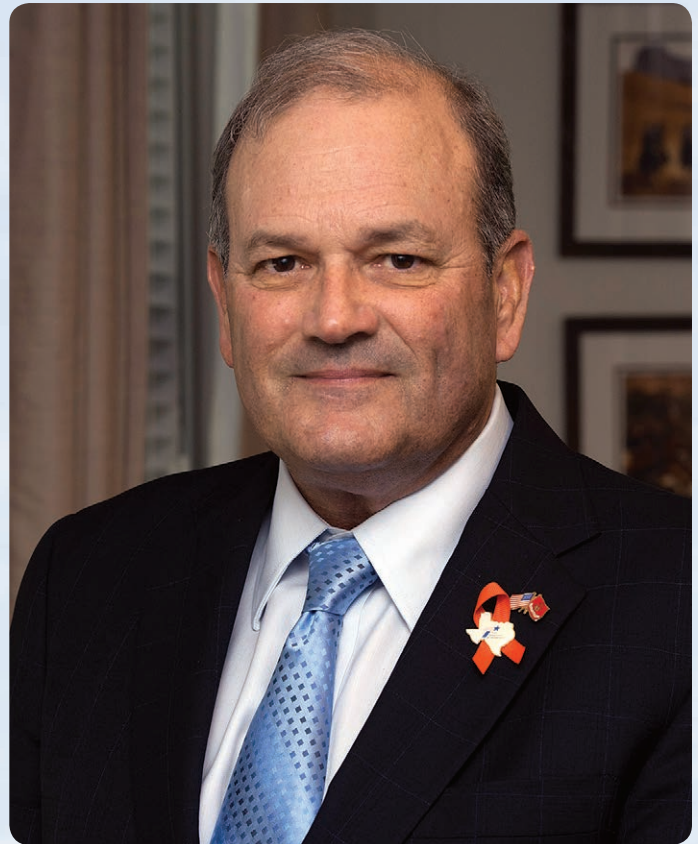
TXDOT HAS A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Texas Department of Transportation has a new Chief Executive Officer, Lieutenant General Joe Weber, USMC Retired. On April 4, 2014, the Texas Transportation Commission met in a Special Called Meeting at which time General Weber was appointed as the new TxDOT Executive Director. A Texas A & M graduate, General Weber retired from the Marine Corps in 2008, at which time he became Vice President of Student Affairs at Texas A & M. In that role, he was responsible for the

strategic planning, direction, and development of fiscal and human resources, and how they impact the overall experience of nearly 57,000 students at the university.

Previously, General Weber spent 36 years in the United States Marine Corps, serving in Iraq as Chief of Staff of the Multinational Forces, his final duty assignment as Commander of U.S Marine Forces Command, responsible for some 70,000 marines and sailors.

General Weber will provide the leadership much needed as we face the transportation challenges of a rapidly growing state. ♦



Lt. Gen. Joe Weber, USMC, (Ret), the new executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation.



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David S. Fulton

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TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE *continued from pg. 1*

and keep working on improving aviation in Texas. As I travel around the state, I marvel at all the wonderful aviation facilities that also enhance economic development opportunities for your communities.”

Fulton noted that in 2013, AVN issued a record number of grants totaling \$129 million.

“To me, what is important about that number is what was built with those grants,” noted Fulton. “We continue to see the facilities get better and continue to improve our airport system, which I believe is already the best in the nation.”

Fulton also talked about the Routine Airport Maintenance Program, which matches local government grants up to \$50,000 for basic improvements such as parking lots, fencing or other airside and landside needs. Fulton noted that since the program started in 1996, AVN has issued about \$65 million in preventative maintenance.

Other topics covered by Fulton included the announcement of TxDOT’s new Executive Director Lt. Gen. Joe Weber, the continued funding of the contract tower program, and a new bill that has been introduced in Congress, H.R. 3708, named the “General Aviation Pilot Protection Act of 2013.” This act would allow pilots to use the driver’s license medical standard for non-commercial VFR flights in aircraft weighing up to 6,000 pounds with no more than six seats. The act would also require the FAA to report on the safety consequences of the new rule after five years.

Fulton lauded the act noting “there is no empirical evidence for the requirement that an individual obtain an FAA medical for this type of flying operation if they possess a valid state driver’s license and comply with any medical requirements associated with that license.”

After Fulton’s address, the morning session continued with presentations about business aviation in Texas from Brian McCoy, CEO of McCoy’s Building Supply, and Scott Miller, Manager of Aviation Safety for Valero Energy Corporation. The presenters stressed the importance of aviation in conducting business throughout Texas and the world.

“During a period of tremendous growth for our company in the 1980s, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of us having a flight department that enabled us to travel to all the places we needed to visit in a timely manner,” said McCoy. “Every single week, me, my dad and brother, and other members of our management team were traveling and checking on our store operations and meeting customers.”

Rounding out the morning session was the keynote address from John Ansbach about generational dynamics in the workplace.

2014 AVIATION AWARD WINNERS

General Aviation Airport Manager of the Year

Brandon Cox, Moore County Regional Airport

Most Improved Airport of the Year

Limestone County Airport, Mexia

General Aviation Airport of the Year

Terrell Municipal Airport, Terrell

Reliever Airport Manager of the Year

Cynthia Godfrey, Mesquite Metro Airport

RAMP Coordinator of the Year

Billy Bob Galbreath, San Angelo District

Texas Aviator of the Year

Dr. David Campbell



Dr. David Campbell, recipient of the 2014 Texas Aviator of the Year award, alongside his wife, Peggy, and daughters Chari Hurst and Carolyn Pass.

2014 AVIATION ART CONTEST WINNERS

CATEGORY I AGES 6-9

1st Place

Kary Xu, HJM School, Port Lavaca

2nd Place

Augustine Su, Bowie Elementary, Dallas

3rd Place

Elijah Oestreich, Winnsboro Elementary, Winnsboro

Honorable Mention

Keira Modkins, Kipp Zanith, Houston

CATEGORY II AGES 10-13

1st Place

Sreeniketan Sai Senapathi, Katy

2nd Place

Shirley Yu, Robinson Middle School, Plano

3rd Place

Kayla Justiss, Breckenridge Jr. High, Breckenridge

Honorable Mention

Madison Applegate, Kingwood

CATEGORY III AGES 14-17

1st Place

Chelsey Wen, Jasper High School, Plano

2nd Place

Gabriela Escamilla, Veterans Memorial, Brownsville

3rd Place

Thomas Yu, TX Academy of Math and Science, Plano

Honorable Mention

Ashlynn Harris, Spring Hill, Longview

Honorable Mention

Gage Stone, Lucyle Collins Middle School, Lake Worth

The afternoon breakout sessions featured various topics of interest to conference attendees including airport compliance issues, an airport manager's roundtable, the iPLEDGE Safety program and pavement maintenance and management.

The afternoon also featured a session on airport economic development and marketing. During the discussion, the presenters stressed the importance of involving the community with airport activities and shared experiences.

Rob Mark, CommAvia CEO, encouraged the audience to identify key community officials who influence the airport's operation and work to engage them through social media and onsite events.

"Your airport is part of your community, and it's important to create awareness, garner industry interest, and support other airport businesses as well as support new airport business growth," said Mark.

"We continue to improve our airport system, which I believe is already the best in the nation."

TxDOT Aviation Director David Fulton

The day concluded with the annual awards banquet. (see sidebars)

The final morning of the conference began with presentations on two topics that have recently garnered headlines throughout the state: the future of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and the impacts of oil and gas activities in Texas. The morning sessions also focused on military airspace issues and a TxDOT/DOT-FAA Airport Improvement Program listening session.

"Our main goal when planning the conference is to feature topics that are of relevant and timely interest to our participants," said Texas A&M Transportation Institute Research Scientist and program organizer Jeff Borowiec. "This year's conference featured presenters

who are on the front lines of many of these issues. I hope our audience enjoyed their time and took away a lot of ideas that will benefit them in the future."

The presentations from the 2014 Texas Aviation Conference are available online at <http://ti.tamu.edu/conferences/tac14/>. ♦

GRANTS RECEIVED

Hearne Municipal Airport	\$528,380	Install game fence with four gates; clear fence line and install signage at the Hearne Municipal Airport.
Caldwell Municipal Airport	\$1,265,900	Design and construction services to rehabilitate and mark Runway 15-33; rehabilitate and mark aprons and taxiways; construct hangar access taxiways and apron area for aircraft run-up; construct nested T-hangars
Cleburne Municipal Airport	\$1,595,360	Rehabilitate and mark Runway 15-33; rehabilitate terminal apron, hangar area 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; rehabilitate parallel taxiway A and B and cross taxiways; replace medium intensity runway lights; and install LED lights
Dimmit County Airport	\$1,583,040	Reconstruct, widen and mark south parallel taxiway; rehabilitate and mark Runway 13-31; rehabilitate taxiway B, turnaround Runway 31 end, aprons; north parallel taxiway and design and construction of precision approach path indicator 4 approach
Mount Pleasant Regional	\$1,540,060	Construct two 10 unit T-hangars and new hanger access taxiway
Limestone County Airport	\$2,860,810	Construct new south aircraft apron; construct cross taxiways and partial parallel taxiway to Runway 36; reconstruct apron; rehabilitate north hangar access taxiways
Scholes International Airport/Galveston	\$1,153,440	Replace PCC slabs North Apron and clean joints north apron
Lancaster Regional Airport	\$1,130,000	Design and construction of terminal building and new terminal auto parking with entrance road
Navasota Municipal Airport	\$516,333	Design and construct new fuel facility
Navasota Municipal Airport	\$881,250	Design and construction to construct apron for fuel facility and box hangars; construct access taxiway for T-hangar

JAMES BROWN: FEELING GOOD ABOUT COULTER FIELD

By Rick Davenport
Texas A&M Transportation Institute



Coulter Field Airport Manager James Brown

The James Brown that manages Bryan's Coulter Field may not be "the Godfather of Soul," but he certainly *feels good* about aviation. Born in Waco in 1985, Brown, 27, was hired in May, possibly making him the youngest airport manager of a general aviation airport in Texas, and perhaps even the country.

However, don't assume that Brown's youth and inexperience works against him. Talk aviation with him, and you immediately realize he has a vision for a different Coulter.

Brown was hired by Kevin Russell, director of development services for the City of Bryan. "I was impressed right away during the interview process. You could tell he was eager to take charge," Russell says of their first meeting. Russell was struck by some of Brown's ideas.

"There is a lot of potential here," Brown says, in a matter-of-fact tone. "The decisions we make now have the potential of changing our community. A feasibility plan has recently been approved, and within that is a proposal to extend the runway, which would be a boon to our area. Combined with numerous other projects that are planned and already approved, Coulter could soon become a bigger asset to the region." Brown is responsible for developing Coulter's first-ever business plan.

His interest in aviation began with a fascination with aircraft engines. He never wanted to be a pilot; he wanted to know how the engines worked and how to fix them. He would become an avionics technician for Boeing before signing on as an airport maintenance technician at the New Braunfels Regional Airport. While there, the airport underwent a dramatic transformation under the leadership of another young airport manager. Lenny Llerena

initiated a \$12 million capital improvement project for New Braunfels. As a result of the major changes at New Braunfels, Llerena was named the 2012 General Aviation Manager of the Year.

"I'm not surprised that James was selected as Coulter's airport manager," Llerena says. "He was ambitious and I was more than happy to share my ideas. He understood what I was trying to do and why. I don't care if you're 27 or 87, if you are ambitious and have a vision, I don't think it matters."

Brown thinks some of the same improvements that happened at New Braunfels can also happen at Coulter. It already has a good start.

Pilots are now able to obtain weather information about Coulter Field after an automated weather observation station (AWOS) was purchased by the City of Bryan with assistance from TxDOT's Aviation Facilities Grant Program; a new hangar was just completed adding to the 12 other hangars on site; an expansion to the airport's parking lot has been proposed; an upgrade to the fuel farm is being considered; a drainage project and a game fencing plan have been approved; an upgrade to the runway lighting system will begin next year; and of course, the proposal to extend the runway to 5000 feet.

"If the runway extension is approved, being able to have corporate jets land at Coulter will be great news for the numerous pilots who have to go to other airports with longer runways," Brown explains. "If they can come here, they will spend money in the region and they will buy fuel at our airport."

With all the improvements on the horizon, Brown knows that none of them would be possible without support from city officials and the community. He's especially proud of the American Cancer Society *Relay for Life* event hosted at Coulter Field each spring.

"That's where I get a lot of satisfaction," Brown says. "My goal is to make sure the public and local organizations understand that this airport belongs to them." ♦

SO LONG, SANDRA!

Sandra Braden, a planner in TxDOT Aviation's Planning Section, recently retired after more than 30 years at the agency. TxDOT Aviation staff, friends, and family gathered for an evening cruise down Lady Bird Lake in Austin, and then met for a retirement luncheon at TxDOT Flight Services.

Sandra and her husband Al are planning on hitting the road in their camper. Best of luck, Sandra, and you will be missed! ♦



TxDOT Aviation Division Airport Planner Michelle Hannah and Sandra Braden.

LOCAL AIRPORT PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY, SUPPORT TO TEMPLE AREA

By Rick Davenport
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

Rich with history, the Draughon-Miller Central Texas Regional Airport has grown at a slow, but steady pace. This spring, in the most ambitious effort in its history, an \$8 million renovation project will be completed.

For the old timers, that sounds like a lot of money especially considering the city acquired the land (about 1,000 acres) from the federal government for just \$1 after World War II. (The airport was renamed in honor of the first two Bell County casualties of the war, pilots Miller Draughon and Raymond Miller.)

"The airport is really critical to our economic development," Temple City Manager David Blackburn explains. "We've invested in the airport and made it a focus of the city's strategic efforts. Our lease rates are very competitive and we have some great corporate tenants."

Most of that renovation project funding will go toward runway reconstruction, but there are numerous other needs, including taxiway rehabilitation, concrete ramps and back-up generators for the fuel farm, airfield lighting and the operations building. Additionally, the city will improve the parking lot lighting, update airport signage and landscape the entrance.

"Our main business is corporate jets, general aviation and military aircraft. Not only do we want to make sure they have a great facility, we want to make sure we are open for business when the weather turns bad," Airport Manager Sharon Rostovich said.

For her, the airport project is the culmination of a 27 year-long love affair with the Temple municipal airport.

It began in 1986, when Rostovich was hired as the secretary for the then-airport manager. After serving in that capacity for several other managers through 1997, the straight-shooting Rostovich became the boss.

"I think I got the job by default," she says. "I guess the city figured I had been here long enough to run things."

Born and raised in Temple (and after 11 years of learning the ropes), Rostovich was the local girl who got the job, though not a pilot and, in fact, had never been on a plane. At times, though, she says it was a challenge.

"There was no big announcement, no hoopla. At the time, there were only a handful of women heading up municipal airports in the state. I think some of our customers and even some tenants did not know how to react. There was certainly a good-ole-boy network in place. But through the years, I've been able to get things done, and have always had the backing of city leaders," she said.

She says the airport has survived and prospered thanks to conservative budget projections, a diverse area economy, Texas Department of Transportation and other funding opportunities, and the city's emphasis on creating a first-class facility.

Those tenants and other airport users include the McLane Company, Wilsonart, Scott & White Hospital, area law enforcement, Fort Hood and even helicopters hired by area ranchers to shoot feral hogs invading Central Texas.

"I have seen a lot of changes to the airport in the last 27 years," said Rostovich, who plans to retire when she reaches 30 years of employment. "With all the improvements that have taken place, whoever becomes the next airport manager will have a great starting point." ♦



Central Texas Regional Airport Manager Sharon Rostovich



The recently reconstructed runway 13-31 at Kleberg County Airport in Kingsville

2013 Aviation Division Annual Report

Message from the Director

We Texans are proud of many things that are unique to our state. Whether it is the vast expanse of land that stretches from the Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley or the vibrant economy led by the rapidly increasing production from the Eagle Ford Shale and the Permian Basin, it is truly a great time to be a Texan. We at the Aviation Division are particularly proud of the general aviation airport system in Texas, which provides more than 56,000 jobs, with \$3.1 billion in payroll and \$14.6 billion in total economic output. Among the 2013 highlights was the Aviation Division investing more than \$5.5 million in the design and construction of hangars and more than \$10 million at the Addison Airport in the reconstruction of runway holding bays and taxiways. The improvements at the Addison Airport required approximately 12 separate stages of construction and over a year to complete, but have greatly improved the efficiency and safety of one of the state's busiest general aviation airports.

Our significant projects and programs are represented in this annual report. This format provides readers with quick access to a broad spectrum of our work.

We know that more work remains and that we can continue to improve the 297 airports in our system that serve the 28,953 registered aircraft and 49,886 active pilots who flew over 2 million hours in Texas last year. It is also a tribute to our airport managers, our stakeholders, and governmental officials who help make the Texas airport system the finest in the country.

David Fulton, Aviation Division Director
Texas Department of Transportation

Division Overview

The Aviation Division helps cities and counties obtain federal and state funds for reliever and general aviation airports included in the Texas Airport System Plan (TASP). The division also participates in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) State Block Grant Program, through which it implements a federal improvement program for general aviation airports.

Division staff responsibilities include oversight for the planning, engineering, and grant management of aviation capital improvement projects across the state. The division also operates a fleet of state-owned aircraft for the transportation needs of state officials and employees.

Capital Investment Highlights

In 2013, \$67 million was invested in airport infrastructure from reliever airports to small, rural general aviation airports. This number includes:

- \$11.5 million in maintenance/rehabilitation/reconstruction work to maintain and preserve the existing system;
- \$21.9 million in capacity improvements for runways, taxiways, and apron space;
- \$32.5 million in airport improvements to ensure they meet FAA standards and safety compliance;
- \$1.06 million in master plans, business plans, and feasibility studies; and
- \$479,000 in environmental impact studies.



The new 11,000-square-foot terminal building at Texas Gulf Coast Regional Airport. The \$2.7 million facility includes administrative offices, fixed-based operator services, aviation and car rental/lease space, and the general public terminal/lobby and pilot's lounge.

Funding the Airport System

The Aviation Facilities Development and Financial Assistance Program is administered by the division. Funding for airports in the TASP comes from federal, state, and local sources.



The new air traffic control tower at Mesquite Metro Airport. The 80-foot tall tower is staffed by Federal Aviation Administration contract air traffic controllers and will enhance the safety of the airport's daily operations.

Texas is a participant in the FAA State Block Grant Program, and takes the lead in carrying out the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) for general aviation and reliever airports in the state. As such, TxDOT acts as the agent for the state and political subdivisions with airports for the purpose of applying for, receiving, and disbursing federal airport improvement funds.

The AIP uses Aviation Trust Fund monies to invest in the National Plan of Integrated Airports Systems. Trust Fund revenues come from an assortment of aviation user fees and taxes authorized at the national level. In addition, TxDOT provides funding for important non-federally eligible airports in the TASP.

Combined, the TxDOT Aviation Capital Improvement Program contains specific federal and state eligible projects for development during an upcoming three-year period and implements the program through grants to public entities for the purpose of establishing, constructing, reconstructing, enlarging, or repairing airports or navigational facilities. The number of projects in the program at any one time is constrained by available funds and system priorities. Local governments also provide a match for funding airport projects,

which is typically 10 percent.

Federal Programs

Hangar/Fuel Program

If all airside needs are met, an airport sponsor may pursue funding for the construction of hangars. Federally eligible airports can use Non-primary Entitlement monies for the construction of hangars. State airports are also eligible under the same policy. Hangars are eligible for 90/10 grant funding. Airports without a fuel-dispensing system are eligible to participate in 75/25 grant funding for the aboveground Fuel Facility Development Program.

2013 highlights include:

- investment of **\$5.5 million** for hangar development,
- five fuel farms constructed for **\$2.2 million**.

Air Traffic Control Towers

In 2003, following the passage of a federal funding bill, the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Program offered 90 percent grants up to a maximum of \$1.5 million to qualifying sponsors for construction of air traffic control towers and associated communication equipment. Beginning in 2012, the ATCT Program maximum funding amount was changed to \$2 million.

2013 highlights include:

- construction and opening of Mesquite Metro air traffic control tower. The project was paid for by a **\$1.7 million** federal grant and **\$925,000** of local matching funds.

State Programs

Airport Terminal Grant Program

The TxDOT Aviation Division Airport Terminal Grant Program provides 50 percent matching funds up to \$500,000 to sponsors of eligible publicly owned airports for construction of new terminal buildings or remodeling of existing terminal buildings. The Terminal Grant Program also provides up to \$100,000 in matching funds for appropriate vehicle parking and entrance roads.



At Addison Airport, two new concrete aircraft holding bays were constructed on both ends of Taxiway Alpha. The north aircraft holding bay capacity was increased by 35 percent compared to the existing holding bay configuration.

2013 highlights include:

- construction and opening of a terminal building at Texas Gulf Coast Regional Airport located in Brazoria County, and
- **\$100,000** for design and engineering of a terminal building at Eastland Municipal Airport.

Automated Weather Observing Systems (AWOS)

AWOS can detect and report weather information like surface wind speed and direction, ambient air temperature, dew point temperature, atmospheric pressure, visibility, sky condition, and precipitation. The system’s “voice” broadcasts local, minute-by-minute weather data from the ground directly to the pilot in the aircraft. This important information improves safety for pilots flying en route and when landing aircraft.

The division’s AWOS program began in 1997, and today, 92 systems have been built and maintained. This year, two new systems were installed, and one existing system was upgraded and relocated.

2013 highlights include:

- **\$343,000** invested for the construction/upgrade of three AWOS.

Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP)

RAMP is a cost share program between the Aviation Division, the 25 TxDOT districts, and the general aviation airports in Texas. The program is designed to assist communities with needed maintenance by offering state financial assistance. RAMP funding is a \$50,000 match per airport for each fiscal year. The program includes lower-cost airside and land-side airport improvements. Over the years, the program has grown from 30 participating airports with total expenditures of \$250,000 to nearly 200 airports with state grant funds of over \$3.5 million.

2013 highlights include:

- **214** grants issued, and
- **\$3.7 million** invested for routine airport maintenance, with an additional **\$3.8** matched by the airport sponsor.

Flight Services

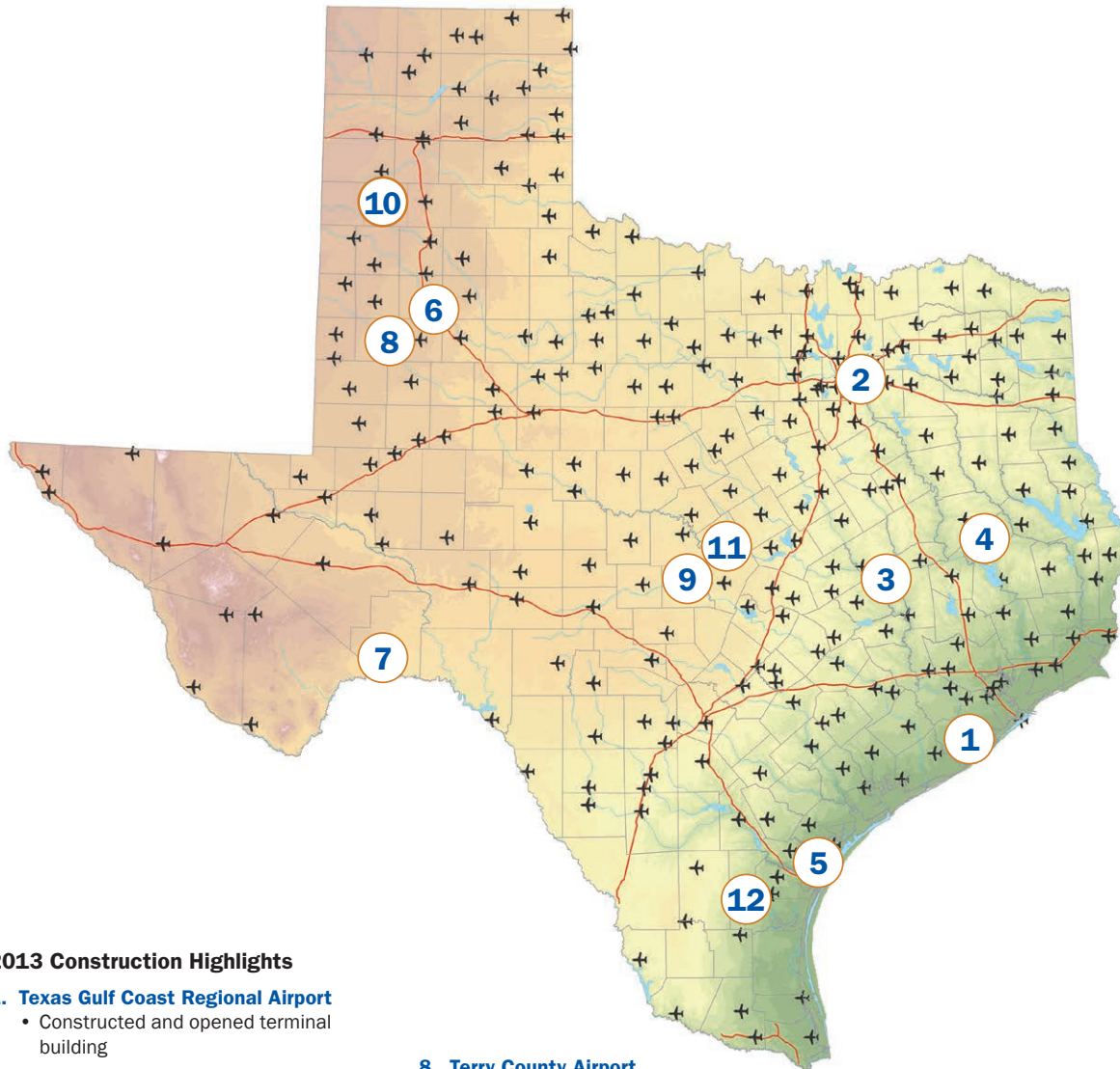
TxDOT Flight Services provides low-cost travel to state officials, employees, or sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. The Aviation Division operates and maintains the fleet, which is based at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Besides providing transportation, Flight Services also provides maintenance services to a fleet of 48 state-owned aircraft—18 helicopters and the remainder a variety of fixed-wing airplanes—with 13 full-time mechanics. In 32 years, Flight Services has 67,000 hours of incident- and accident-free flying.

2013 highlights include:

- providing services for **40** different state agencies,
- transporting nearly **3,000** passengers, and
- flying approximately **1,300** total hours.

**Aviation in Texas—Facts and Figures
Number and Types of Airports**

- 27 Commercial Service Airports—Public airport with a minimum of 2,500 passenger boardings each year; has scheduled passenger aircraft service
- 24 Reliever Airports—Very high levels of activities with many jets and multiengine propeller aircraft; around 200 based aircraft
- 67 Business/Corporate Airports—Jet-capable runways with high levels of activity with some jet and multiengine propeller based aircraft
- 108 Community Service Airports—Business access to smaller communities; 20 based aircraft and around 6,000 operations
- 68 Basic Service Airports—Typically lower activity levels providing additional convenience for clear-weather flying and training operations
- 3 Heliports—Used by individuals, corporations, and helicopter taxi and medical services



2013 Construction Highlights

1. Texas Gulf Coast Regional Airport

- Constructed and opened terminal building

2. Mesquite Metro

- Constructed and opened air traffic control tower

3. Coulter Field

- Installed AWOS
- Constructed new hangar

4. Houston County Airport

- Installed new AVGAS fuel system

5. McCampbell-Porter Airport

- Installed drainage culvert for new hangar under construction
- Constructed 13-unit T-Hangar (50 x 295)

6. Slaton Municipal Airport

- Rehabilitated and marked runway 18-36
- Rehabilitated apron and stub taxiway
- Constructed concrete fueling pad

7. Terrell County Airport

- Replaced medium intensity runway lights for 13-31

8. Terry County Airport

- Rehabilitated and marked runway 13-31
- Reconstructed west-side hangar access taxiway
- Constructed access taxiway and aprons for west-side hangars

9. Llano Municipal Airport

- Constructed four-unit hangar and paved surrounding access area

10. Dimmit Municipal Airport

- Rehabilitated and marked runway 1-19, taxiway, and apron

11. Lampasas Municipal Airport

- Currently constructing hangar and hangar access taxiway and apron entrance

12. Kleberg County Airport

- Reconstructed runway 13-31 and south taxiway



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AOPA'S FIRST REGIONAL FLY-IN IN SAN MARCOS

By Yasmina Platt
AOPA's Central Southwest Regional Manager

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) held its very first (of seven) Regional Fly-in in San Marcos on April 26, 2014. The goal of an AOPA Regional Fly-In is to create a positive, grassroots relational experience for our members and the local aviation community, to promote the value of general aviation and to draw positive attention to the local airport and its value to the community. We want to meet our members in their own backyards and hear firsthand what is on their minds.

A whopping 700 airplanes had RSVPed to attend but IFR conditions the morning of the event kept some aircraft away. Still, over 2,500 pilots and aviation enthusiasts attended and 350 aircraft flew in despite the overcast layer to check out the aircraft displays and exhibitor tent, attend seminars and enjoy great food and camaraderie.

The event got underway with a traditional fly-in breakfast: yummy pancakes and sausages prepared by AOPA staff members and volunteers. Lunch was also served and free for all AOPA members: brisket, sausage, and several side dishes.

Aircraft ranged from light sport aircraft to biplanes, jet trainers and helicopters. The Experimental Aircraft of America's (EAA's) B-17 Aluminum Overcast gave a few rides also. A couple of Bell Boeing V-22 Ospreys entertained the crowd as well with their helicopter and airplane capabilities.

Several seminars were held throughout the event, including topics like owner-performed maintenance, flying with iPads, stick-and-rudder flying and improving radio communications. The Pilot Town Hall meeting in the afternoon was standing room only where AOPA President Mark Baker and I gave an update on state and federal issues and initiatives as well as answered questions from the audience. EAA President Jack Pelton also joined Mark Baker on the stage to talk about the partnership between the two organizations.

A large number of the attendees also signed a traveling petition on display in support of the third class medical reform. This was a popular stop for most pilots.

I also cannot forget to mention the Rusty Pilots seminar conducted on Friday night where approximately 90 people received a great ground school in preparation for their FAA flight review after many years (as many as 28 years) of inactiveness.

But, none of this could have happened without the great help of 185 volunteers, who helped set up, parked cars and aircraft, served meals, cleaned, etc.

Thank you to all of you who came, volunteered and spent a wonderful day with us. The event was widely successful and we look forward to many more. Unfortunately though, we will have to wait until 2015 to have another one in our Central Southwest Region.

You can read more about these and other developments in our region and specifically in Texas by visiting <http://www.aopa.org/Advocacy/Airports-and-State-Advocacy.aspx> or following me on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/AOPACentralSW> or @AOPACentralSW). ♦

VALERO FLIGHT SERVICES

WORLD'S LARGEST INDEPENDENT REFINER RELIES ON AVIATION TO CONDUCT BUSINESS AROUND THE WORLD



The Valero Energy Corporation fleet of Gulfstream G550s.

By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

It's hard to pinpoint what is more impressive about Valero Flight Services—their commitment to safety and best practices, their experienced and dedicated 36-member aviation team, or their new facility with its large climate-controlled hangar, commercial kitchen and workout facility. Whatever the reason, the Valero Flight Department is a great example of how business aviation should serve its company.

UPGRADING THE FLEET AND FACILITIES

Several years ago, Valero Flight Services began transitioning from a domestic focus with two Learjet 60s and two Cessna Citation Xs to their current fleet of three Gulfstream G550s. According to Vice President of Aviation John White, the move toward a larger intercontinental fleet allows them to better serve Valero, the world's largest independent refiner of transportation fuels, with the ability to fly their personnel to its 16 refineries and 10 ethanol plants across North America and around the world.

"We gain all the efficiencies of dealing with only one type of aircraft," noted White. That really makes everything from training to operations to maintenance more efficient."

Valero's Gulfstream fleet operates 100 percent paperless in flight and is equipped with enhanced vision systems, head-up display, electronic charts with triple redundancy and synthetic vision systems.

"Also, the 550 is an extremely capable tool," said White. "It's able to fly short trips, operate from high elevations and from shorter runways as well or better than many smaller

airplanes. Add to that the capability of carrying up to 15 passengers and flying 6,700 nautical miles non-stop, and it's obvious that it's a very versatile and capable business tool."

While the fleet has been upgraded, so has the headquarters of Valero Flight Services. Several years ago, the aviation team moved into a new 52,000 square-foot facility at San Antonio International Airport. The facility features a spacious passenger lobby, exercise room and 39,000 square-foot hangar that easily accommodates the Valero fleet of Gulfstreams.

The facility also has a full commercial kitchen in which the cabin safety crew member (CSCMs) prepare all the meals from scratch for flights; a practice that not only saves money but ensures food safety. How impressive are the executive chef CSCMs at catering for the flight crew and passengers?

"A few years ago we went on a 6-day, 39-flight hour and 6-flight leg trip to Indonesia with a crew of three pilots," said Valero Director of Aviation Tripp Riedel. "All 77 meals for crew and passengers were prepared by our CSCMs in advance at our facility."

Valero's aviation headquarters also has an operations center for pilots, schedulers and company travel agents, who are available to book travel for any employee of Valero.

MAKING SAFETY A PRIORITY

Valero achieved International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO) certification in 2007. In Aug. 2008—

the culmination of a two-year certification process—the flight department earned voluntary protection program (VPP) certification, a safety program sponsored by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Valero is one of only two flight departments in the nation to hold both IS-BAO and VPP certification. When asked about his department's commitment to best practices and safety, White explained that his group has a demanding standard to live up to.

"I was recently at a company-wide management meeting to review year 2013 and look forward into year 2014. Our company is in the refining business. That means that we cook crude oil in order to turn it into something useful. It's inherently a dangerous business. Valero is very focused on safety but even so, from time to time there is an accident. Valero's accident record ranks very well within the industry. It occurred to me as I listened that that portion of the program that in my job, ranking well in the industry would be failure. A perfect safety record is a requirement.

"Knowing that we must live up to such a demanding standard causes us to be laser-focused on safety every second of every day. IS-BAO, VPP along with a good safety management system (SMS) are tools we use to help us know that we are doing all we can do."

SERVING VALERO

Valero is focused on safety and efficiency with an overriding goal of excellence in all flight department activities. With its fuel farm and the capability of their fleet of Gulfstream 550s to fly out and back on the same day to anywhere in North America or nonstop to Europe without refueling, Valero Energy saves money on every gallon of fuel it burns. The staffs of onsite flight coordinators and travel agents are constantly looking for ways to maximize corporate travel efficiency.

"Valero's corporate fleet is available to any employee with a business travel need," explained White. "Since the Valero commercial travel department is part of the aviation department, part of our job is to make a determination as to which mode of transportation to deploy to serve the company best. We simply make a call based on not only cost but also efficiency. More often than not, the passengers on the Valero airplanes will be mid-level business professionals such as engineers, attorneys, accountants or refinery personnel."

CLEARING THE AIR REGARDING BUSINESS AVIATION

After spending an afternoon touring Valero Flight Services with John White, Tripp Riedel and Manager of Aviation Safety Scott Miller, it's impossible not to be impressed with the department's facilities and commitment to best practices. But White is also passionate about educating the general public about business aviation and how it can be an asset to any company and community.

"The public, to a large extent, believes that general/business aviation is a bunch of 'fat cats' flying around in private jets," said White. "And, no doubt, there are a few of those; however, the vast majority of general/business aviation is flown in furtherance of business and commerce. In fact, business aviation contributes more than 180 billion dollars to the American economy and is responsible for supporting 1.2 million jobs. General aviation is a beautiful American story, one that everyone ought to hear." ♦

On the north end of San Antonio International Airport lies a bustling hub of commerce led by corporate aviation giants Valero, HEB, Zachry Construction and a relative newcomer, Skyplace Center. The businesses form what is known as the San Antonio International Airport General Aviation Taskforce, whose goal is to share resources (such as training programs) to help other small flight departments succeed.

Zachry employees about 15,000 people companywide, with approximately 2,000 in San Antonio. Their headquarters is in San Antonio, with engineering centers across the United States in Denver, Amarillo, Omaha, Minneapolis and a Nuclear Engineering Center in Stonington, Conn.

Texas grocery giant HEB has 350 stores (50 of which are located in Mexico), over 78,000 employees and is the 12th largest privately owned company in the United States. According to Director of Aviation Mark Miller, their flight services department is an integral part of the organization's success.

"We can fly anywhere in Texas or Mexico and return to San Antonio in the same day," said Miller. "Obviously that allows us to streamline our operations by planning multiple visits in a day, thus maximizing our time."

The newcomer to the group is Skyplace Center, a new general aviation development and fixed based operator that services both U.S. and Mexican aircraft. Skyplace offers services such as fuel, ramp-side vehicle access, ground transportation, a Part 145 repair station, a flight planning center and a renovated terminal building with many amenities. A federal inspection station is also planned for construction adjacent to the facility. For more information, please visit <http://skyplacecenter.com/>.

WINGTIPS PROFILES

AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER MICHAEL SCHNELL

This is one of a continuing series of profiles featuring members of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee. The six members are appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission for six-year terms and assist the Texas Department of Transportation with its aviation development programs. Committee members also work with the legislature on various aviation issues. Members must have at least five years of experience in the field of aviation and a strong interest in supporting Texas' general aviation program

Everyone has a passion for something, especially in the Texas Panhandle. Mike Schnell of Spearman, Texas — the newest member of the TxDOT Aviation Advisory Committee — has three. In no particular order, the things that motivate Schnell include flying, public service and making sure we never forget the sacrifices that were made by our war heroes.

Those first two passions are engrained in who he is. As chairman and CEO of First State Bank of Spearman, Schnell often flies to other parts of the state for business. It makes sense, considering he can be in just about any Texas city in 90 minutes, thanks to his Cessna Conquest. His public service includes 25 years on the Spearman Airport Board and his contributions as a Spearman City Council member.

But that third passion — recognizing our war heroes — has become a lot more personal.

“When I was off at college in 1973, at the tail end of the Vietnam War, my mom called and told me that our family friend had been shot down and was missing in action,” Schnell recalls. “It’s been over 40 years ago, but I’ve always remembered Sam Cornelius’ sacrifice.”

Several years ago, Schnell figured out a way to make sure the people of Spearman could honor Cornelius. With Spearman City Council approval, Schnell began the Federal Aviation



New Texas Aviation Advisory Committee member Michael Schnell standing next to the Major Samuel B. Cornelius Field memorial.

Administration paperwork to have the municipal airport renamed. In 2009, the Spearman Airport was officially changed to Major Samuel B. Cornelius Field.

"Sam was a local hero. He was a star Spearman High School football player who earned a scholarship to Texas Tech. He was recruited by the pros, but instead joined the Air Force and became a pilot," Schnell says. "In his third tour of duty, he was shot down in his F-4 Phantom Jet over Cambodia after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. His remains have never been recovered. We lost a great one. And he was only 30."

Shortly after the airport was renamed, a local boy — as part of his Eagle Scout project — raised enough money to build a granite monument in honor of Cornelius.

"With community support, we made sure Spearman will always remember," Schnell says. "I would urge other communities across Texas to do what we did. There are so many local heroes out there that time has forgotten."

Wingtips: What was it about aviation that interested you?

Schnell: Growing up in the late 50's and early 60's, I was always impressed with the stories of bravery exhibited by our airmen in World War II. Not just the pilots but the aircrews also. I was fascinated with all of the WWII aircraft, especially the fighters. I suppose it was the dream of flying a fighter someday that always kept me interested in aviation. I did finally own a 1942 AT-6D; not a fighter but the next best thing.

Wingtips: What was your motivation in accepting the appointment on the Texas Aviation Advisory Commission?

Schnell: To assist, however possible, in the promotion and advancement of general aviation in Texas, whether on a local level or through my elected officials.

Wingtips: Even though you are new to the advisory committee, are there any specific goals you would like to accomplish?

Schnell: I believe Dave Fulton and his staff at TxDOT Aviation have done an amazing job of rehabilitating our Texas airports to the point of being the envy of many states. That being said, I do believe that many veteran pilots or crew could be honored by their communities by renaming a local airport in their memory. Let's not forget their sacrifice.

Wingtips: What are the biggest challenges for general aviation (GA)?

Schnell: I believe that one of the biggest challenges facing GA today is the stigma placed on it by many of our elected federal officials. When corporate aviation departments began shutting down after the automaker debacle, tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs nationwide. Corporate aviation should be viewed as the job creator it is rather than the luxury many people believe it to be. Also, the FAA certification process for aircraft and more especially avionics and powerplants, has hampered modernization of our GA fleet with the exception of "experimental" aircraft which seem to be on the cutting edge of technology, and at a more affordable price.

Wingtips: What would you like the public to know about general aviation in Texas and why non-pilots should care about it?

Schnell: As most successful business people know, time really is money. With Texas being the 2nd largest state and having only 27 airports served by scheduled air service (their schedule not yours), GA becomes even more necessary to any growing community. A quality airport is a sign of a progressive and forward thinking community. ♦

MESQUITE METRO AIRPORT OPENS NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER

By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

On December 16, 2013, the City of Mesquite held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the opening of the \$2.8 million air traffic control tower at Mesquite Metro Airport. The 80-foot tall tower is staffed by Federal Aviation Administration contract air traffic controllers and will enhance the safety of the airport's daily operations.

While the gleaming tower may be the "star on top" of recent additions to the airport—which includes a state-of-the-art terminal building—longtime Airport Director Cynthia Godfrey keeps an eye on the future while fondly remembering her humble beginnings at the facility.

"I came to Mesquite in the middle of 1997," says Godfrey. "This airport was a diamond in the rough, but I had a vision and could see that the city could do a lot with this facility."

When Godfrey first began working at the airport, her first challenge was forming a committee and working with the city to show them what an asset the airport could be to the community.

"We formed an airport advisory committee and formulated a game plan and presented it to the council, which they signed off on," says Godfrey. "One of our first initiatives was going to TxDOT for money to do a master plan, which was completed in 1998."

Once the master plan was complete, Godfrey started the projects which were completed in 8 - 9 years. Then she and the advisory committee began a second master plan.

Since 1997, Godfrey has completed \$21 million in major projects at the airport including:

- ramp extensions,
- replacing asphalt taxiways with concrete,
- renovating old hangars,
- purchasing hangars from private developers,
- building corporate hangars alongside the new terminal building,
- improving airfield drainage,
- building new localizer and ILS sheds and
- constructing a terminal building.

The terminal building opened in 2004, and features passenger and pilot lounges, an executive conference room, wi-fi and weather information for pilots.

"The terminal building was built with the state funding program that [Texas Department of Transportation Aviation Division Director] Dave Fulton started for terminal building growth in Texas," says Godfrey. "It's another one of those things we couldn't have done without TxDOT's help. We originally worked out of an old hangar that had been renovated into offices that had been in place probably since the airport opened. So it's very nice to move into our new facility."

The official commissioning for the air-traffic control tower was February 6. According to Godfrey, construction presented many challenges along the way.

"We certainly had some unique situations along the way, since there's a learning curve with finding contacts, learning equipment and being under the threat of not having staff for the tower," says Godfrey. "But we're operational now and very excited about the tower."

Next on the project list are corporate aircraft hangars, which will be located on the south end of the airport. The concrete apron for the hangars has already been poured in preparation for the construction.

"We have a waiting list for hangar space; we don't have a spot empty on the field," says Godfrey. "The facilities we have in the terminal building have helped our traffic immensely."

Godfrey also plans on opening a restaurant inside the terminal building.

While she does take the time for an occasional drive around the facility to reflect on all the completed projects and how far the airport has come in her 17-year tenure, don't expect Godfrey to rest on her laurels. She would rather spend her time focusing on future projects and continuing to sell the value of the airport to the community.

"People have an idea that an airport is just for rich people to be able to fly their planes; that is not the case, nor has it ever been since I've been in the business," says Godfrey. "The city council knows the importance of our airport and how it's an economic engine for Mesquite. We are always selling our airport to our local community."

For more information about Mesquite Metro Airport, visit their website at <http://www.cityofmesquite.com/airport/index.php> or contact Cynthia Godfrey at cynthia.godfrey@ci.mesquite.tx.us. ♦

MESQUITE METRO AIRPORT AT A GLANCE

- 6000-foot runway and taxiway
- ILS and RNAV approaches
- Itinerant and long- and short-term hangar space
- Airport security staff
- Perimeter access control
- Surveillance video
- Daily airfield and safety checks
- No landing fees
- Line service by City of Mesquite
- AvFuel branded 100LL & Jet A fuel
- Self-serve Jet A and 100LL
- After hours fueling
- Maintenance facilities by Michels Aviation, Mesquite Aviation and Mesquite Aircraft Services
- Helicopters accommodated


MOONEY PRODUCTION TO RELAUNCH

A According to Mooney CEO Dr. Jerry Chen, the new leadership at Mooney has spent the past few months preparing the dormant company's return to manufacturing. The airplane manufacturer was purchased last October by Soaring America Corporation, a new California-based company financed by a group of Chinese investors.

"This is an important date in the history of Mooney," said Chen. "There has been an extraordinary effort on the part of everyone at Mooney and I couldn't be more proud of what has been accomplished in a short amount of time."

The company now employs more than 55 people at the Kerrville operation, according to officials, who note that the facility is being upgraded with new manufacturing equipment.

The first plane that will come off the production line in 2014 will be a M20TN Acclaim Type S. The new model will be powered by the TSIO-550-G-Turbo Normalized engine and include an upgraded Garmin G1000 Integrated Avionics Suite. ♦

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Heavy metal: an impressive collection of business jets assembled on the apron at Cotulla-LaSalle County Airport.