



# State Passenger Aircraft Fleet Replacement Plan - UPDATE

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August 2020

*The Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Flight Services Section (FSS) provides air transportation and pilot services to state officials, employees, and sponsored contractors traveling on official state business.*

*FSS's mission calls for the provision of "... safe, cost-effective, and efficient aerial transportation of state employees ..."*

*While FSS's daily focus on its mission helps state officials and agencies fulfil their mission to meet the needs of the state; that mission becomes critical when Texas is faced with major emergencies such as hurricanes and other natural disasters, and state and national crises.*

## **BACKGROUND**

The TxDOT Flight Services Section (FSS) provides air transportation and pilot/co-pilot services to state officials, employees, and sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. FSS provides maintenance services for aircraft owned by other state agencies, including the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas A&M University, and University of Texas at Austin. It also sells fuel to those agencies and higher education institutions for their flights.

Chapter 2056 of the Texas Government Code requires all state agencies to develop strategic plans. Texas Government Code §2205.032 further directs TxDOT to develop a long-range plan for its fleet of aircraft. This plan provides the basis for analysis and action to enable TxDOT to meet its mission to provide "...safe, cost-effective, and efficient aerial transportation of state employees ..." in both the near- and long-term.

## **CURRENT FLEET STATUS**

TxDOT's FSS currently operates and maintains a fleet of six aircraft which consists of four Embraer Phenom 100 6-seat passenger planes (transport), and two Cessna 2- to 3-seat planes (utility). The four Embraer passenger aircraft are new to the fleet, replacing the four aged Beech King Airs. TxDOT took delivery of the aircraft during the summer of 2019. Following training of pilots and mechanics, the aircraft were placed into passenger service and the old aircraft were retired and sold. Initial deployment of the new aircraft has been successful and met with positive response from passengers; as well as FSS staff.

As with the airline industry at-large, use of the FSS passenger fleet has been severely restrained since March 2020 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. TxDOT has developed protocols for safe and appropriate operations, including travel, based on directives from the Governor's office and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and state health officials and leaders.

## **FUTURE ANALYSIS**

As the current environment for travel changes and use of the FSS passenger fleet returns to normal levels, TxDOT will analyze use of the new aircraft and provide future updates to this report on the TxDOT.gov website.