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TxDOT RESOURCE LINKS
Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or click on the resource link buttons located here and at the bottom of every page of this document to direct you to additional resources and more details on the information provided in this document.

• Texas Department of Transportation
  TxDOT's public website for agency information and resources focused on meeting the needs of drivers, businesses, government officials, and those who want to learn more about TxDOT.

• TxDOT 2021-2022 Educational Series
  TxDOT’s complete 2021-2022 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the state of Texas.

• Visual Dictionary
  TxDOT’s Visual Dictionary is designed to provide better understanding of transportation elements, words, and concepts.

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AVIATION

OVERVIEW
The nation’s scheduled-service air carrier airports (major commercial airports) are the most visible component of the United States air transportation system. However, the majority of aircraft activity takes place at smaller airports around the country that serve the general aviation segment of airport operations. General aviation makes up all aircraft operations that are not scheduled commercial service or military flight operations. General aviation airports comprise nearly 85 percent of the airports in the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems and nearly 92 percent of the facilities in the Texas Airport Systems Plan. Of 8.7 million flights that took place in the state in 2019, 5.3 million, or 61 percent, were general aviation.

To support the state’s general aviation transportation demand, the State of Texas through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has invested more than $1.7 billion in federal and state funds over the past 30 years to improve and maintain the state’s system of airports. TxDOT’s responsibilities include providing engineering, technical, and financial assistance to Texas communities for planning, constructing, and maintaining general aviation airports. TxDOT manages federal and state funds to provide financial assistance for local airport development through the Aviation Capital Improvement Program. TxDOT provides aviation education and is actively involved in working with communities to improve general aviation. TxDOT also maintains and operates the state-owned aircraft fleet to provide aircraft flight services to state officials and state employees for state business.

TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM PLAN, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES
TxDOT has developed a statewide aviation facilities plan, known as the Texas Airport System Plan. This plan identifies airports and heliports in the state that perform essential roles in the economic and social development of their local community. There are approximately 2,040 public and private landing sites in Texas, but the Texas Airport System Plan only includes 292 airports and three heliports that meet state and federal requirements and are eligible for state and federal funds. By limiting the number of airports in the Texas Airport System Plan, TxDOT and local airport sponsors can minimize the duplication of facilities in a service area and help ensure good stewardship of public financial resources.

The primary goals of the Texas Airport System Plan are to develop a statewide airport system, to provide adequate access by air to the population and economic activity centers of the state, and to provide timely development of Texas’ airport system. Other Texas Airport System Plan goals include maximizing the economic benefit and return on investment to the state, local communities, counties, and cities from the development of the airport system and integrating the airport system effectively with other modes of transportation.
To meet these goals, the primary objective of the Texas Airport System Plan is to provide air access based on desired levels of aviation service throughout the state. The Texas Airport System Plan supports airports that:

- Provide scheduled commercial service within a 60-minute drive of population centers;
- Support business jet activity within a 30-minute drive of population and mineral resource centers; and
- Support single and twin-engine piston-powered aircraft within a 30-minute drive from agricultural resource centers.

Additional objectives of the Texas Airport System Plan are to provide adequate airport capacity to meet forecasted demand and to provide an airport system developed to applicable federal and state planning and design standards. The planning process identifies capital improvement opportunities and provides guidance for programming of federal and state funding assistance for airport development. The current Texas Airport System Plan is under review, with an anticipated completion in mid-2022.

**GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS**

The airports that serve the general aviation segment of aviation represent the majority of the facilities included in the Texas Airport System Plan. General aviation airports are the principal means of meeting the Texas Airport System Plan goal of providing air access to widely dispersed economic activity centers of the state. The Texas Airport System Plan classifies airports according to the roles the airports perform in providing essential access. The role of the airport influences the airport design and the type of aircraft it can accommodate. Similarly, the main functional use of the airport further determines what features must be in place to meet the needs of the users and the community. The four classifications for general aviation airports are:

1. Reliever Airports;
2. Business and Corporate Airports;
3. Community Service Airports; and
4. Basic Service Airports.
RELIEVER AIRPORTS

The Federal Aviation Administration designates reliever airports to relieve congestion at commercial service airports. Reliever airports are located within a major metropolitan area and provide alternative airport facilities for general aviation users. Reliever airports accommodate various classes of aircraft, from large business jets to smaller piston aircraft, with the purpose of diverting general aviation traffic from commercial service airports.

Reliever airports have 100 aircraft based at the airport or 25,000 annual travelers or the airport sponsors forecast it will reach these metrics within two years. Reliever airports generally serve population centers of 250,000 or more. Since 1982, the Federal Aviation Administration has emphasized the development of reliever airports as a way to increase the national system capacity. Examples of Texas reliever airports include Sugar Land Regional Airport, McKinney National Airport, and Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AIRPORTS

Community service airports provide primary business access to smaller communities throughout the state, add capacity in many of the metropolitan areas, and provide access to agricultural and mineral production areas. Community service airports are generally beyond a 30-minute drive from a business and corporate, reliever, or commercial service airport. Each of these airports has 20 based aircraft or 6,000 annual operations (takeoffs and landings), or the airport sponsor forecasts it will reach these metrics within five years. Many community service airports are within 25 miles of a significant national recreation or preservation area. All community service airports will accommodate single-engine and light, twin-piston-engine aircraft. Sufficient activity often exists at many of these locations to justify maintenance or upgrade of the layout design standards to accommodate turboprop and business jet aircraft, such as the George West, Gilmer, and Port Aransas community service airports.

BUSINESS AND CORPORATE AIRPORTS

Business and corporate airports provide access to turboprop and turbojet business aircraft. Airport sponsors locate this type of airport where there is sufficient population or economic activity to support a moderate to high-level of business jet activity or to provide additional capacity in metropolitan areas. Business and corporate airports serve communities located more than 30 minutes of ground travel time from the nearest commercial service or reliever airport. Each airport has 500 or more annual business and corporate aircraft operations (takeoffs and landings) or at least two permanently-based jets, or the airport sponsors forecast it will reach these metrics within five years. Some of these airports are within 25 miles of a significant national recreation or preservation area, such as the Brenham, Brownwood, and Fort Stockton airports.

BASIC SERVICE AIRPORTS

Basic service airports are beyond the service area of commercial service, reliever, business and corporate, or community service airports or are in remote areas of the state. These airports typically have very low activity and provide additional convenience for clear weather flying and training operations. Many basic service airports cannot expand to meet the size and layout standards to support business access and may represent the only public landing site for many miles. Examples of basic service airports include Newton, Panhandle, Robert Lee, and Morton airports.
GENERAL AVIATION HELIPORTS

General aviation heliports accommodate helicopters used by individuals, corporations, and helicopter taxi and medical services. Scheduled passenger service may be available if sufficient demand exists. There are three general aviation heliports in the Texas Airport Systems Plan: Dallas Central Business District Vertiport, Garland & Dallas-Fort Worth Heloplex, and Desoto Heliport.

AVIATION FUNDING

TexDOT and local airport sponsors use a variety of financing tools to implement the Texas Airport System Plan. While commercial service airports generate significant revenue to support their operations and maintenance, general aviation airports have limited opportunities to generate self-sustaining revenue. Texas Airport System Plan airports rely on public financing for capital improvements. TexDOT administers the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program for general aviation airports under a state block grant program agreement. TexDOT uses appropriations from the federal Airport and Airway Trust Fund and state funding to support general aviation facilities.

ROUTE AIRPORT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM GRANTS

The Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP) assists airports in funding proper maintenance activities to preserve previous investments in airport infrastructure. TexDOT provides Routine Airport Maintenance Program grants using state funds to help facilitate lower cost airside and landside airport improvements. The grants may support maintenance activities or additional items of work such as constructing airport entrance roads, paving airport public parking lots, installing security fencing, or maintaining the Automated Weather Observation System. The state will match up to $50,000 per airport for each fiscal year at 50 percent of the actual cost of eligible items. The local government share is 50 percent of actual costs plus any excess of $100,000 in total costs. TexDOT determines the eligibility of specific items and places first priority on airside maintenance and improvements over any requests for assistance with airport landside maintenance and improvements. Local governments can issue contracts for the grant work, or local TexDOT districts can perform the services within their capabilities.

AIRPORT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Texas is one of ten federal Airport Improvement Program block grant states. As such, TexDOT takes on the responsibility of the Federal Aviation Administration for the federal Airport Capital Improvement Program. The Airport Capital Improvement Program is a federal improvement program for general aviation airports. Because Texas is a block grant state, TexDOT prepares and the Texas Transportation Commission reviews and approves federal grant funds for more than 180 eligible Texas airports. The Airport Capital Improvement Program establishes a tentative three-year schedule of federal and state airport development projects. The program categorizes airport needs by the objective to be addressed. The objectives, in order of importance, assigned by the Texas Transportation Commission are:

- Enhance safety;
- Preserve existing facilities;
- Respond to present needs; and
- Provide for anticipated needs.
**TxDOT FLIGHT SERVICES**

TxDOT's Flight Services provides low-cost and efficient travel to state officials, employees, or sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. TxDOT operates and maintains the state’s fleet of six aircraft at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. TxDOT uses four planes for passenger services and two planes for special purposes, such as aerial photography surveying and emergency operations.

In 2019, TxDOT retired the aging state fleet of passenger aircraft, all of which were well over 20 years old, replacing them with state of the art turbofan powered aircraft. The new aircraft provide a significant improvement in performance, which reduces overall operating costs, while significantly improving safety and efficiency.

Additionally, TxDOT Flight Services provides maintenance and fuel 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; and
- Institutions of Higher Education.

**FUTURE OF TEXAS AVIATION**

The size of the state and distances between population centers make air travel a vital mode of transportation in Texas. In addition to serving the needs of decentralized industries and businesses, aviation offers opportunities for the development and diversification of the state’s economy. Significant growth in international trade, particularly with Canada, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, places an increased emphasis on facilities that enable Texas to compete globally.

Because the demand for expanded aviation services in new markets supports a growing state economy, aviation and the Texas Airport Systems Plan will remain an integral part of transportation planning for Texas. TxDOT’s Texas Airport Systems Plan provides the path for that development.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The national air transportation system is an economic driver as it facilitates connections between people, communities, and businesses. Due to the size of the state, air transportation is particularly significant to Texas.

A high-quality network of publicly accessible airports supporting general aviation activities in Texas is important to the state’s economy. The consolidation of several legacy airlines has dramatically affected airline service for smaller cities. As a result, many businesses and corporations have chosen to purchase and operate their general aviation aircraft to meet their air transportation needs as well as to access areas of the state without commercial service operations.

Business and flight support activities at general aviation airports generate billions of dollars in economic activity, create jobs, and improve business operating efficiencies that help Texas recruit and retain some of the nation’s best companies. General aviation aircraft also support emergency medical transportation, law enforcement, agriculture applications, aerial firefighting, and disaster response throughout the state.

The focus of the Texas Airport Systems Plan is on the general aviation airports that provide capacity to the system in urban areas and the airports serving the state’s smaller communities. Today, most communities recognize that local airports are essential to attracting business development for their local economies.

In a 2018 study and analysis of the economic impacts of general aviation in Texas, CDM Smith in conjunction with the Texas A&M Texas Transportation Institute estimated that in 2017 the general aviation industry maintained 48,089 jobs and generated approximately $9.3 billion annually in Texas.

**AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Texas Aviation Advisory Committee provides input to TxDOT on its aviation development programs and serves as its representative among aviation users. Committee members also work with members of the Texas Legislature on various aviation issues. The Aviation Advisory Committee consists of nine members who serve three year terms appointed by the Commission to advise the Commission and TxDOT on aviation matters. A majority of the members of the committee must have five years of successful experience as: (1) an aircraft pilot; (2) an aircraft facilities manager; or (3) a fixed-base operator.

For the most up-to-date information on TxDOT's Flight Services.

https://www.txdot.gov/government/programs/sharing.html

For the most up-to-date information on The Texas Aviation Advisory Committee.

https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/aviation/advisory.html
TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM MAP

Click Here or scan QR Code to view a full sized map online.

AVIATION

For the most up-to-date information on Aviation.

https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/aviation.html
Texas Department of Transportation
Project Tracker

Project Tracker is the gateway to up-to-date information about TxDOT highway improvement projects, providing 24/7-access to the public, employees, and elected officials.

Texas Department of Transportation
2021-2022 Educational Series

TxDOT’s complete 2021-2022 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the state of Texas.

Texas Department of Transportation
Government Affairs

TxDOT’s Government Affairs Division works closely with government on both the state and federal levels though the State Legislative Affairs and Federal Affairs sections.

Be Safe. Drive Smart. Thank you!