WINGTIPS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION
AVIATION DIVISION.

GREETINGS FROM STINSON AIRPORT

San Antonio's Historic Airport

Texas Department of Transportation

FALL 2017

DAVE'S HANGAR

New FAA medical certification program off to a great start!

Basic Med, a new path for meeting the medical requirement for most private pilots, is off to a flying start. The new program, which began on May 1, 2017, permits the vast majority of general aviation pilots who have held a valid medical certificate any time ten years prior to the date of the act, July 15, 2016, to never again have to take a FAA approved medical examination. During the first 100 days of the program, more than 15,000 pilots have qualified to fly under Basic Med.

Before flying under Basic Med, pilots must get a physical exam by a state-licensed physician, have the associated checklist completed by the physician, and complete the online aeromedical course-in that order. A pilot meeting these requirements will be permitted to fly non-commercial VFR or IFR flights in aircraft weighing up to 6000 pounds, having no more than six seats, no higher than 18,000 feet, at a maximum airspeed of 250 knots.

There are four steps in qualifying for Basic Med certification.

- Step one is to download the Comprehensive Medical Examination Checklist and fill out the "individual information" section.
- Step two is to take the checklist to any state-licensed physician who will complete the physical examination following the checklist and then sign it.
- Step three is to complete the medical self-assessment course and pass the quiz. After taking the quiz, you complete a form to be transferred to the FAA containing the physician's identifying information.
- Step four is to print the course completion certificate and keep it with your logbook or store it electronically.

I would highly recommend contacting AOPA's Pilot Information Center staff at 1-800-872-2672 if you have any questions. Speaking from personal experience, they were great in helping me through the process.

Basic Med is the single most important thing to happen for the General Aviation Industry in a long time. More people will be learning to fly, buying airplanes, and flying longer than ever before. AOPA member and Senator Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, deserves a great deal of credit for leading the Basic Med effort to a successful conclusion.

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Dave's Hangar
3 Solco Retires as FAA Southwest Regional Administrator
4 Rob Blanchard: 2017 Airport Manager of the Year
5 Texas Airports Council — Serving General Aviation
5 November is Aviation Appreciation Month!
6 – 7 Greetings from Stinson Airport
8 Conroe Airport Director Retires After Nearly Decade on the Job
9 LSUASC Test UAS Flights With New Detect-and-Avoid Radar Technology
9 San Antonio Opens GA Federal Inspection Station
10 2016 Aviation Division Annual Report Now Available
10 Texas Airports!
11 Grants Received

Texas Department of Transportation

SOLCO RETIRES AS FAA SOUTHWEST REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Kelvin Solco, FAA's Regional Administrator for the Southwest Region, retired on August 3 after serving with the FAA for 36 years. Solco was appointed Regional Administrator in 2014. FAA's Southwest Region includes over 4,600 employees in the states of Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and New Mexico.

Serving as the FAA's senior executive and principal representative of the administrator for this region, Solco worked closely with representatives of the aviation industry, various federal, state and local government agencies, and civic and private interest groups. He directed delivery of corporate services through the region including command and communication operations, building and facility services, executive services, and cross organizational project integration.

Brad Brandt, Aviation Division Director for the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development and Chair of the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), thanked Solco for his years of service with the FAA and his dedication to the safety of the citizens in the five states in the region. "It has been a pleasure to work alongside Kelvin and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors."

Solco worked in several FAA offices as a resident engineer, design engineer, program manager, and a Regional Associate Program Manager for Navigation and Landing Facilities. He served as the assistant Airports Division Manager in the Southern Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia from June 2002 to April 2005, before becoming the Southwest Region Division Manager in Fort Worth, Texas in 2005.

Solco holds a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from Prairie View A&M University, and an MBA from LeTourneau University. He is a registered professional engineer in the State of Texas; a graduate of the Senior Executive Fellows Program at Harvard University and has written a technical paper for the Arizona State University (ASU) Approach Lighting Symposium in 1998. Solco has also represented the FAA in technical exchange meetings in London, England and Brussels, Belgium.

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ROB BLANCHARD: 2017 AIRPORT MANAGER OF THE YEAR

By Rick Davenport
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

It was 2002 and Rob Blanchard was looking for civilian employment following his decorated, 23-year military career as a Navy aviation maintenance officer. But when he applied for the advertised aircraft log and records clerk job at McGregor Executive Airport, the airport manager — who was about to retire — urged Rob to apply for his job. And he got it.

Fast forward 15 years and Rob Blanchard was on stage at the Annual Texas Aviation Conference receiving one of TxDOT's most prestigious honors: The Airport Manager of the Year Award. To many of his colleagues, the honor was overdue.

"He is the best airport manager I've worked with in the 40 years I've been in the municipal management business," McGregor City Manager Kevin Evans says. "He is focused, thorough, consistent, and he follows through. Rob is always focused on what is best for the airport."

Over the last 15 years, under Blanchard's leadership, McGregor Executive Airport has seen more than its share of major improvements: refurbished runways, new runway lighting, installation of precision approach path indicators, new airport signage, construction of additional hangars to keep up with demand, a new fuel site, construction of two new ramps, a refurbished north apron, new game fencing surrounding the airport's 800 acres…..and the list goes on.

"I've become an expert in looking for money," Blanchard admits. "I apply for TxDOT grants every chance I get. I could not do anything without TxDOT. They are there for support and they do a great job doing it."

Blanchard is equally appreciative of the McGregor City Council because of its support of airport improvements and its belief in the value of aviation for a community. Unlike many general aviation airports, McGregor Executive Airport actually makes money for the city.

Situated just seven miles west of Waco, McGregor's airport is a nearby, uncrowded alternative for business travelers and recreation seekers. And thanks to the improvements over the years, it provides a top-notch facility for pilots who conduct more than 40,000 operations each year.

So, after two successful careers, is the McGregor airport manager ready for retirement?

Blanchard says he still has plenty of work to do. He's in the process of rehabilitating the terminal ramp, wants to have the southeast apron improved and would like to double the size of the west apron.

"I want to keep on contributing. Every year I seem to find a new challenge, so it looks like I will be here for a while," he says.

McGregor Executive Airport Manager Rob Blanchard.

TEXAS AIRPORTS COUNCIL — SERVING TEXAS GENERAL AVIATION

The aviation industry and airports are a big part of Texas. There are nearly 300 airports across the state and more than 27,000 general aviation aircraft registered in Texas. With such a massive number of airports, a statewide organization is needed to represent the interests of the airports to local municipalities, the state and at the federal level. The Texas Airport Council (TAC) helps to fill that role for Texas.

"Texas Airports face a lot of challenges," notes TAC Vice President and Fort Worth Meacham Airport Manager Jeff Kloska. "Among them are funding problems in regards to needed AIP improvement grants and issues with the airport's sponsor, airport and airplane noise, lack of sponsor support, legislative issues, outdated or non-existent airport documents, and economic development."

TAC allows airport industry experts to meet and help one another on issues and build a collective knowledge to better Texas airports as a whole. TAC seeks to work with all communities to maximize the economic contribution of their airports and to ensure through legislative activities that adequate funding is in place to continue to maintain and improve Texas airports. TAC is also partnering with TxDOT Aviation on a lot of exciting things going forward in an effort to ensure Texas has the country's best state aviation system.

"The Texas Airports Council (TAC) is dedicated to promoting all airports in the State of Texas," says TAC President Lenny Llerena and Director of Aviation at Victoria Airport. "We also help promote and educate about the economic benefits of airports in local communities within the State of Texas. TAC represents member airports in matters that may affect their operations, economic benefits or standing in the community. We also help with legislative efforts to ensure the operational and economic stability of airports in Texas."

TAC depends on its sponsors and members in order to be successful. It needs to continue to grow and gain Texas airport members in the form of sponsor staff, airport staff, engineering and design consultants, and airport contractors within the state of Texas. If you would like to join, visit their website at www.texasairportscouncil.com/memberships/.

NOVEMBER IS AVIATION APPRECIATION MONTH!

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has proclaimed November as Aviation Appreciation Month. In his declaration, Governor Abbott stated "The Texas aviation industry is critical to our economy and way of life. It brings families together; transports business executives to important meetings; delivers essential cargo; provides life-saving evacuation, police search and rescue, utility grid and oil pipeline inspections and border protection; and it helps control pests that wreak havoc on farmer's crops."

Governor Abbot also encouraged "all Texans to learn more about aviation and to recognize the contributions of the hardworking professionals who work in all sectors of the aviation industry."

GREETINGS FROM STINSON AIRPORT

By Chris Sasser
Texas A&M Transportation Institute

San Antonio is a city steeped in history. Whether touring the iconic 18th-century Spanish mission The Alamo or the Spanish Governor's Palace, to any visitor it's clear that the city embraces its rich cultural history. Stinson Municipal Airport (SSF), a designated reliever airport located seven miles south of downtown San Antonio, is the second oldest general aviation airport in continuous operation in the United States making it a perfect fit for the city.

But don't be fooled by the 100-year-old airport's age nor the terminal building built in 1936, which recently underwent an extensive renovation and expansion that modernized the building while maintaining the original design's integrity. This is a modern, thriving airport in every sense of the word.

"Over the past 10 years, we've had $30 million in capital improvements from the terminal building expansion to the runway extension," noted Nathan Polsgrove, Chief Strategy and Development Officer for the San Antonio Airport System. "There's an additional $24 million planned in the next few years. We are fortunate that our city leadership is incredibly supportive of Stinson."

One of the upcoming projects is a new air traffic control tower that will feature a unique winged design. Construction on the new tower began on March 29.

"We had a design competition that had 13 different architectural firms submit plans," said Stinson Airport Manager Morris Martin. "I think it was appropriate being the wings over Stinson. It does add a little bit of cost and time to the project, but I think it shows the level of commitment that our city government has to making this airport unique. We are a good match with the history of San Antonio, and we have several projects that are going to tie into the local heritage sites."

Martin was the recipient of TxDOT's 2017 Reliever Airport Manager of the Year award.

One of the projects is a looped hike and bike trail connecting Stinson to the Mission Reach river trail. The $2.4 million project is slated for completion in 2018. Connecting the Stinson terminal building to the hike and bike trail will be a new parking lot and plaza, due for completion in 2017.

Artist rendition of Stinson Airport tower that is currently under construction.

Other upcoming projects include a land prep project that will prepare 32 acres of property for future hangar development, a wayfinding signage project, an aeronautical survey to determine opportunities for new or improved approaches and a new parkway that will improve airport access.

Besides the ongoing improvement projects, the airport is home to a first-class FBO (FBO Gate One) and a new barbecue restaurant called The Big Bib. Other tenants include:

- Texas Air Museum
- Texas Air Shuttle charter operation
- Alamo Helicopters helicopter operation
- San Antonio Police Helicopter Unit
- Red Wing Aerials aerial photos

"Right now we have an RFI (request for information) about the viability of building a hangar style hotel," said Polsgrove. "And we are implementing a frequent user loyalty program where visitors to the airport have a punch card that will go toward receiving a Stinson Airport gold coin."

From aviation-themed movie nights to hosting kid day fly-in events, the airport has a close and important connection with the large community.

"The city is very proud of its history, and we're an important part of that history," said Martin. "But one of the things we do is also look ahead to the future to keep us strong and viable for the next 100 years."

Editor's Note: Nathan Polsgrove is no longer employed at the San Antonio Airport System at the time of this publication.

STINSON AT A GLANCE

Website: www.sanantonio.gov/SSF

FAA Identifier: SSF

Control tower: yes

Lights: DUSK-DAWN.
MIRL RY 09/27 and 14/32

Runway 9/27: 5000 X 100 ft.

Runway 14/32: 4128 x 100 ft.

Aircraft based on the field: 96

Aircraft operations: avg 250/day

Fuel available: 100LL JET-A

Parking: hangars and tiedowns

Airframe service: MAJOR

Powerplant service: MAJOR

CONROE AIRPORT DIRECTOR RETIRES AFTER NEARLY A DECADE ON THE JOB

By John S. Marshall
jmarshall@hcnonline.com

After nearly 30 years in the airport business, the director of Conroe's airport is heading into retirement.

Scott Smith, who worked as the director of the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport for nearly 10 years walked out of his spacious office with expansive views of the airport and its runways and taxiways for the last time July 28.

Instead of overseeing airport operations that include thousands of planes taking off and landing at the airport on an annual basis, the 69-year-old Smith says instead he will be working with horses on the family horse ranch, reading and playing music.

"It's bittersweet," Smith said, as he spoke of retirement during the last few hours on the job. "As a profession, airport management, if you like aviation, is a great profession. It's challenging, so I will miss that."

During the nine years and eight months at the airport, Smith has overseen work and expansion of the facility as it continues its evolution from what was once a sleepy, little airport to a regional facility now nationally recognized for helping relieve some of the pressures at George Bush Intercontinental Airport. The recognition comes as more small planes land and take off in Conroe, instead of Houston's busy airport.

In 2016, Conroe-North was named General Aviation Reliever Airport of the Year by the Texas Department of Transportation.

"That's a real honor," said Smith, noting that the airport was competing with hundreds of other airports for the distinction.

During Smith's tenure as airport director, traffic at the airport has expanded in what Smith describes as a "steady climb." An average of about 180 planes a day take off and land at the airport now, bringing the total landings and takeoffs to about 63,000 a year.

"It's been a real honor to serve at this airport because it's supported politically and supported by its community," Smith said. "And it's been a fantastic staff, including some key county departments that have really helped us."

Texas A&M Transportation Institute Research Scientist Jeff Borowiec (left) and Scott Smith.

LSUASC TEST UAS FLIGHTS WITH NEW DETECT-AND-AVOID RADAR TECHNOLOGY

A new detect-and-avoid radar technology for small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) was successfully tested earlier this month in Texas.

The Lone Star UAS Center of Excellence and Innovation at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (LSUASC) worked with AirRobot and Echodyne to successfully fly three drones in the same airspace over a simulated "capsized boat" in the Laguna Madre, according to a news release. This marked the first time a small UAS on-board radar successfully detected boat traffic in a major waterway along with small UAS traffic flying in the area.

The tests were completed at The Charles R. Johnson Airport in Port Mansfield, Texas. The flights were among those that took place across the nation over the last month that involved NASA, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the test sites.

During the Texas flights, An AR 180, provided by AirRobot, was equipped with the new MESA-DAA airborne sense-and-avoid radar. Echodyne created the radar for the flights, which is designed to enable beyond visual line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations for a variety of applications, including package delivery, infrastructure inspection and public safety.

"Echodyne's airborne detect-and-avoid radar is made especially for small to medium UAS and enables safe beyond visual-line-of-site operations – in all environments and conditions," said Jerry Hendrix, Executive Director for the LSUASC, according to the release. "Before the MESA-DAA became commercially available, there were no options for long-range radar on small to medium commercial drones."

The flights also provided NASA with data to help improve BVLOS technology and first-responder priority operations.

"Radar is an ideal sensor technology for all sorts of scanning and imaging applications, especially when environmental conditions are less than ideal," said Thomas Driscoll, Chief Technology Officer for Echodyne, according to the release. "Our radar thrives over other sensors in unpredictable weather conditions, can rapidly scan a broad field of view, can track Cessna-sized targets at distances greater than two kilometers, and dramatically increases situational awareness for UAS operators."

The need for new rules and regulations in low-altitude airspace led to the creation of the Unmanned Aircraft System Traffic Management Plan (UTM), which consists of a series of activities called "Technology Capability Levels (TCL)." Each level increases in complexity.

Testing the new radar was part of NASA's TCL 2, a national campaign focusing on flying small, remotely-operated aircraft BVLOS in sparsely populated areas to demonstrate, evaluate, and refine functional designs and UTM technology prototypes.

The next step, or TCL 3, will focus on testing technologies that maintain safe spacing between responsive and non-responsive UAS over moderately populated areas.

SAN ANTONIO OPENS GA FEDERAL INSPECTION STATION

San Antonio International recently celebrated the opening of its new general aviation Federal Inspection Station.

The facility provides separation of commercial and general aviation aircraft and improves the customer experience for passengers clearing customs, according to an announcement from the airport.

To expedite construction of the 5,000-square-foot building, the city negotiated a public/private partnership with INNOVA Aerospace, which invested more than $2 million. As part of the 25-year lease agreement, the city's aviation department constructed the apron and provided taxiway improvements.

2016 AVIATION DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

The 2016 Texas Department of Transportation Aviation Division Annual Report is now available online. Significant projects and programs are represented in this annual report. This format provides readers with a snapshot of the investments made to improve and maintain our airport system that continually makes it among the best in the nation.

Among the 2016 highlights is the Aviation Division's investment of more than $13 million in the relocation and construction of the south section of taxiway F at Sugar Land Regional Airport and the construction of a bridge and cross taxiways for this relocated taxiway.

To download a PDF of the annual report, please visit: http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/avn/2016-annual-report.pdf

An aerial photo of the construction underway on the south section of taxiway F at Sugar Land Regional Airport.

TEXAS AIRPORTS!

As you may know by now, The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Aviation Division, in cooperation with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), recently initiated a 2017 Texas Aviation Economic Impact Study. To perform this analysis, a team of consultants consisting of CDM Smith and KSA was selected. This study will estimate the economic impact of the Texas airport system, assist in building public support for aviation in Texas, and provide communities with evidence of the economic benefits provided by local airports.

TEXAS AVIATION Economic Impact Study

You have likely already received a survey and contact from a project team member to discuss the information needed for this study. Complete and timely feedback from your airport is critical to obtaining an accurate picture of aviation's economic impact in Texas. So, please take the time to complete the surveys and return them using the postage-paid materials provided.

As always, we appreciate your diligence and cooperation in providing information to help maintain and grow our airport system. If you have any questions, please contact Greg Miller at 512-416-4525 or greg.miller@txdot.gov or Jeff Borowiec at 979-845-5200 or jborowiec@tamu.edu.

GRANTS RECEIVED

South Texas International Airport at Edinburg

$3,333,333

Design and construction services to assist in hangar expansion by the Department of Public Safety for emergency and first responder including facilities where Department of Public Safety aircraft are used for staging and storage purposes.

Texas State Technical College -Waco Airport

$1,080,000

Construction services to overlay, rehabilitate and mark Runway 17L-35R.

Kleberg County Airport

$311,670

Construction services to install emergency generators with new small shed; install electrical for security lighting; install rotating beacon and windsock; and reimbursement for engineering and replacing fence along highway frontage.

Kickapoo Downtown Airpark

$2,297,320

Construction services to expand apron phase 2; install box culvert; and drainage improvement under apron.

San Augustine County Airport

$510,000

Construction services to extend, rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35 with displace threshold; rehabilitate connecting taxiway; rehabilitate apron; and extend medium intensity runway lights.

Panola County-Sharpe Field

$500,000

Construction services to rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35, rehabilitate apron, parallel and cross taxiways, and hangar access taxiways.

Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport

$7,865,100

Construction services to construct parallel taxiway for Runway 14-32; install signage and install medium intensity taxiway lights.

Dallas Executive Airport

$8,823,092

Construction services to extend Runway 13-31; extend taxiway B; construct runway shoulders; relocate Runway 13 localizer, glideslope, ASOS, Runway 31 threshold, and extend medium intensity runway lights; install drainage box culverts for Runway 13-31 shift; LED electrical improvements and Runway shoulder compression joint sealant.

Jacksboro Municipal Airport

$338,230

Construction services to reconstruct, stripe and mark Runway 17-35; reconstruct , stripe and mark apron; reconstruct turnarounds, stub taxiway, partial parallel taixway and fueling area; replace windcone and segmented circle.

Terrell Municipal Airport

$1,675,360

Construction services to construct hangar/terminal access road; perimeter road drainage improvements; northwest airport drainage improvement; construct perimeter fencing and extend utility infrastructure.

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