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# AVIATION

## OVERVIEW

The nation's scheduled-service air carrier 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 is considered to be all aircraft operations that are not scheduled commercial service or military flight operations. General aviation airports make up nearly 85 percent of the airports in the Federal Aviation Administration's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems and nearly 92 percent of the facilities in the Texas Airport Systems Plan.



To support the state's general aviation air transportation demand, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has invested more than \$1.46 billion in federal and state funds over the past 25 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 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, SYSTEM GOALS & 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 only 292 airports and three heliports are included in the Texas Airport System Plan. The limited entry of an airport into the Texas Airport Safety Plan minimizes duplication of facilities in a service area and allows for 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 this 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 development of the airport system and integrating the airport system effectively with other modes of transportation. To meet these goals, the Texas Airport

### Aviation Capital Improvement Program

The Aviation Capital Improvement Program is a tentative three-year schedule of federal and state airport development projects. Airport needs are categorized by the objective they address. The Aviation Capital Improvement Program is updated continually and submitted to the Texas Transportation Commission for approval annually. The objectives of the Aviation Capital Improvement Program, in order of importance, assigned by the Texas Transportation Commission are:

1. Enhance safety.
2. Preserve existing facilities.
3. Respond to present needs.
4. Provide for anticipated needs.



Safety Plan objectives are to provide air access based on level of services required throughout the state. These services include airports that support:

- 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.
- 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.

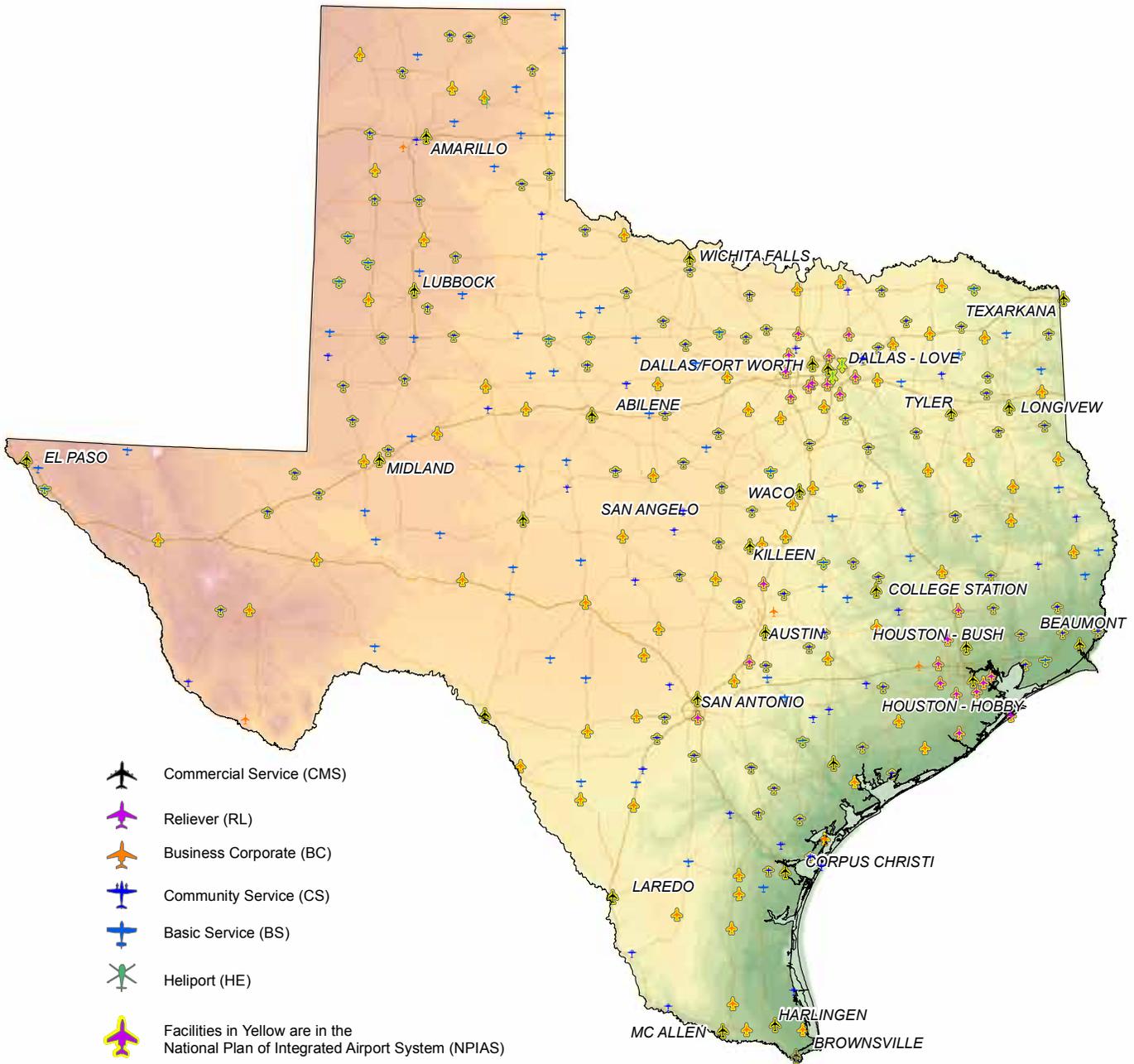
The planning process identifies capital improvement opportunities and provides guidance for programming of federal and state funding assistance for airport development.

## FUNDING

A variety of financing tools are used 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 opportunity to generate self-sustaining revenue. Texas Airport System Plan airports rely on public financing for capital improvements. TxDOT administers the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program for general aviation airports under a state block grant program agreement. These funds are derived from the federal Airport and Airway Trust Fund. Texas also supports general aviation facilities through state funding.



# Texas Airport System Map



## GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS

The airports that serve this segment of aviation represent the majority of the facilities included in the Texas Airport System Plan. General aviation airports are the principle means of meeting the Texas Airport Safety 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 performed 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.
4. Basic Service Airports.

## Reliever Airports

Reliever airports are designated by the Federal Aviation Administration to relieve congestion at commercial service airports and 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 or must be forecast to have 100-based aircraft or 25,000 annual itinerant operations. Reliever airports generally serve population centers of 250,000 or more. Since 1982, the Federal Aviation Administration has placed emphasis on 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.

## Business and Corporate Airports

Business and corporate airports provide access to turboprop and turbojet business aircraft and are located where there is sufficient population or economic activity to support a moderate to high-level of business jet activity or to provide capacity in metropolitan areas. Business and corporate airports serve communities located more than 30 minutes ground travel time from the nearest commercial service or reliever airport. These airports are generally located beyond 25 miles driving distance from other business and corporate airports and serve an area of concentrated population, purchasing power or mineral production. Each may have, or are forecasted to have within five years, 500 or more annual business and corporate aircraft operations or may have at least two permanently based jets. Some of these airports may be located within 25 miles of a significant national recreation or preservation area. Service areas containing an average population of 10,000 and generating approximately \$100 million annually in agricultural production, mineral production or local economic activity will frequently attract economic activity requiring business jet service. However, at least 500 annual business jet operations are normally necessary to support the facilities associated with a business and corporate airport classification.

## 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 located beyond a 30-minute drive from a business and corporate, reliever or commercial service airport. Each of these airports may have, or is forecasted to have, 20 based aircraft or 6,000 annual operations within five years. Many are located 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 upgrading layout design standards to accommodate turboprop and business jet aircraft.

## Basic Service Airports

Basic service airports are located beyond the service area of commercial service, reliever, business and corporate or community service airports or may be located 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.

# 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:

1. Dallas Central Business District Vertiport.
2. Garland & Dallas-Fort Worth Heloplex.
3. Desoto Heliport.

# ROUTINE AIRPORT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM GRANTS

Routine Airport Maintenance Program grants are state funded and help facilitate lower cost airside and landside airport improvements. These items may be maintenance, new or additional items of work such as constructing airport entrance roads, paving of airport public parking lots, installing security fencing or maintenance of an 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 is responsible for any excess of \$100,000 total cost. TxDOT determines the eligibility of specific items and places airside improvements as first priority prior to requesting assistance with airport landside maintenance and improvements.

Local governments can issue their own contracts for scope of services, or TxDOT local districts can perform services within their capabilities.

## 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. Consolidation of several legacy airlines have dramatically affected airline service for smaller cities. As a result, many businesses and corporations have chosen to purchase and operate their own general aviation aircraft to meet their air transportation needs as well as to access areas of the state not served by 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. In the past, these airports were often associated with recreational flying. Today, most communities recognize that local airports are essential to attracting business development for their local economies.

A 2011 study and analysis of the economic impacts of general aviation in Texas conducted by the University of North Texas' Center for Economic Development and Research estimated that in 2010 the industry maintained 56,600 jobs and generated approximately \$14.6 billion annually in Texas. A 2018 study is currently active and will soon report a more recent economic impact of general aviation airports to Texas.

## 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, place an increased emphasis on facilities that will enable Texas to compete globally.

The demand for expanded aviation services in new markets to support a growing state economy promises to ensure aviation and the Texas Airport Systems Plan will remain an integral part of transportation planning for Texas in the future. TxDOT and the Texas Airport Systems Plan provides the path leading to that development .

## TXDOT FLIGHT SERVICES



TxDOT's Flight Services provides low-cost travel to state officials, employees or sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. TxDOT operates and maintains the statewide owned aircraft fleet, which is based at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

### Texas System Airport Key Facts

- Texas 25 commercial service airports enplaned 79.6 million passengers in 2015, an increase of 11 percent from 2013.
- Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport is the fourth busiest airport in the nation with more than 31 million passenger annual enplanements.
- George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston is the 12th busiest airport in the nation with more than 20.5 million enplanements in 2015.
- More than 8.6 billion pounds of cargo landed at Texas airports in 2015.
- Texas has more than 43,000 certificated pilots, and there are over 30,000 active aircraft in Texas, the second highest total in the nation.
- There are 23 federally contracted air traffic control towers in Texas. Denton Enterprise Airport has the busiest contract tower in the state with more than 166,000 annual operations. Denton is the fourth busiest contract tower in the nation. McKinney National Airport is the second busiest contract tower in the state with more than 107,000 annual operations, and it ranks 25th in the nation.

# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



## VALUES:

### People

People are the Department's most important customer, asset, and resource. The well-being, safety, and quality of life for Texans and the traveling public are of the utmost concern to the Department. We focus on relationship building, customer service, and partnerships.

### Accountability

We accept responsibility for our actions and promote open communication and transparency at all times.

### Trust

We strive to earn and maintain confidence through reliable and ethical decision-making.

### Honesty

We conduct ourselves with the highest degree of integrity, respect, and truthfulness.

## VISION:

A forward-thinking leader delivering mobility, enabling economic opportunity, and enhancing quality of life for all Texans.

## MISSION:

Through collaboration and leadership, we deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- **Deliver the Right Projects** – Implement effective planning and forecasting processes that deliver the right projects on-time and on-budget.
- **Focus on the Customer** – People are at the center of everything we do.
- **Foster Stewardship** – Ensure efficient use of state resources.
- **Optimize System Performance** – Develop and operate an integrated transportation system that provides reliable and accessible mobility, and enables economic growth.
- **Preserve our Assets** – Deliver preventive maintenance for TxDOT's system and capital assets to protect our investments.
- **Promote Safety** – Champion a culture of safety.
- **Value our Employees** – Respect and care for the well-being and development of our employees.



This document is part of an educational series on transportation issues produced by the Texas Department of Transportation. This document, the full Educational Series and other helpful resources can be found online at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) keyword search "State Legislative Affairs".