TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2023-2024 EDUCATIONAL SERIES
AVIATION

• Texas Airport System Plan, Goals, and Objectives
• General Aviation Airports and Heliports
• Aviation Funding
• Routine Airport Maintenance Program
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• Economic Impact
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TxDOT RESOURCE LINKS
Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or click on the resource link 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 2023-2024 Educational Series
TxDOT’s complete 2023-2024 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the State of Texas.
OVERVIEW

While the nation’s commercial service airports are the most visible component of Texas and the United States air transportation system, most aircraft activities occur at airports that serve only the general aviation operations. General aviation includes all aircraft operations that are not scheduled commercial service or military flight operations. General aviation airports comprise over 88 percent of the airports in the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and nearly 92 percent of the facilities in the Texas Airport System Plan (TASP). Of the approximately 8.4 million flights in Texas annually, 5.8 million – nearly 70 percent – are general aviation.

To support the state’s general aviation transportation demand, the Texas Legislature, through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), has invested $1.8 billion in federal and state funds over the past 30 years. These investments are used to improve and maintain the state’s system of nearly 300 eligible general aviation airports. TxDOT’s responsibilities include providing planning, engineering, technical, and financial assistance to Texas communities for developing, constructing, and maintaining general aviation airports and related projects. TxDOT manages federal and state funds to provide financial assistance for local airport development through the Aviation Capital Improvement Program (ACIP). TxDOT provides aviation education to local governments and works 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 and ensure all state agency owned and operated aircraft owned and operated by remain in safe flying condition.

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. While approximately 2,079 public and private landing sites are located throughout Texas, the Texas Airport System Plan includes around 300 airports that are eligible for state or federal funds. By limiting the number of airports in the plan, TxDOT and local airport sponsors may minimize duplication of facilities and services in certain areas to support good stewardship of public resources.

The primary goals of the Texas Airport System Plan include developing a statewide airport system that provides adequate access by air to the population and economic activity centers of the state and offers timely development of the state’s airport system. Other goals of the plan include maximizing the economic benefit and return on investment to the state, local communities, counties, and cities through ongoing development and improvement of the state airport system and effective integration of the airport system with other transportation modes.

To meet these goals, the Texas Airport System Plan provides air access based on standard levels of aviation services and infrastructure throughout the state. The plan supports airports’ goals of:

- Providing scheduled commercial service within an hour-long drive of major population hubs;
- Supporting business jet activity within a 30-minute drive of population and mineral resource centers; and
- Supporting single and twin-engine piston-powered aircraft within a 30-minute drive from agricultural resource centers.

Additionally, the Texas Airport System Plan is designed to provide adequate and, when necessary, new airport capacity to meet forecasted demand while adhering to federal and state-mandated planning and design standards. The planning process identifies capital improvement opportunities and provides guidance for programming federal and state funding assistance for airport development. The current Texas Airport System Plan is undergoing a comprehensive update with an anticipated completion date in late 2023. The new plan will incorporate updates to existing plan elements, an examination of key industry trends and opportunities that will shape and guide planning of the state aviation system over the next 20 years, as well as extensive stakeholder and partner outreach.
GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS AND HELIPORTS

General aviation airports represent most facilities included in the Texas Airport System Plan. General aviation airports offer a key means for providing air access to economic activity centers, including major metropolitan areas and key industry hubs, dispersed throughout the state.

To communicate the benefits and roles of general aviation airports nationwide, the Federal Aviation Administration published a study titled General Aviation Airports: A National Asset that examined general aviation airports included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), an inventory of commercial service and general aviation airports included in the national airport system. The study informed the Federal Aviation Administration’s categorization of general aviation airports to meet the changing needs and evolution of airports. Based on its results, the Federal Aviation Administration divided general aviation airports into four asset categories that reflect airports’ existing activity, quantity, and types of based aircraft at the facility, flight volume, and flight types; the categories include national, regional, local, and basic assets.

In addition to providing a comprehensive analysis and explanation of general aviation airport types and roles, the Federal Aviation Administration also provided justification for funding general aviation airport projects. While the Federal Aviation Administration’s general aviation asset categories are not used by TxDOT to make funding or classification decisions, general aviation airport sponsors should use this guidance to understand their role and classification within the national system.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>(Varies among individual airports)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>Serves national to global markets Very high levels of activity with many jets and multi-engine propeller aircraft. Averaging about 200 total based aircraft, including 30 jets.</td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness and Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGIONAL</td>
<td>Serves regional to national markets High levels of activity with some jets and multi-engine propeller aircraft. Averaging about 90 total based aircraft, including 3 jets.</td>
<td>Other Aviation Specific Functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL</td>
<td>Serves local to regional markets Moderate levels of activity with some multi-engine propeller aircraft. Averaging about 33 based propeller-driven aircraft and no jets.</td>
<td>Commercial, Industrial, and Economic Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIC</td>
<td>Often serving critical aeronautical functions within local and regional markets Moderate to low levels of activity. Averaging about 10 propeller-driven aircraft and no jets.</td>
<td>Critical Community Access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Destination and Special Functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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AVIATION FUNDING

TxDOT 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 and rely on public financing for capital improvements. TxDOT uses both federal and state funding to support general aviation facilities. Each year, TxDOT receives approximately $55 million in federal funding – including $19 million in federal apportionment, $24 million in non-primary entitlement, and $12 million in discretionary funding. TxDOT receives $20 million annually in state funding, including a $5 million set aside for the Routine Airport Maintenance Program and $15 million for the Texas Aviation Facilities Development Program, which funds capital projects (see the following sections). As one of ten states that participates in the Federal Aviation Administration’s State Block Grant Program (SBGP), TxDOT administers the Airport Improvement Program for general aviation airports on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration. TxDOT acts as an intermediary for Federal Aviation Administration discretionary and supplemental grant funds for specific airport projects. TxDOT also manages other special funding programs under the Federal Aviation Administration’s purview, such as the recent COVID-19 relief funds in 2020 and 2021. TxDOT also receives state funding through the Texas Legislature’s biennial budget process. These funds are primarily used for projects at airports in the Texas Airport System Plan that are not otherwise eligible for federal funding and to support the Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP), described in the following section.

The state matches up to $50,000 per airport for each fiscal year. The local government share is 50 percent of actual costs plus any amount exceeding $100,000 in total costs. TxDOT determines the eligibility of specific items and places priority on airside maintenance and improvements over requests for assistance with airport landside maintenance and improvements. Local governments can issue contracts for the work, or the local TxDOT district can perform the services in some instances.

AIRPORT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

As a federal block grant state, TxDOT, on behalf of the state assumes responsibility on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration for the federal Airport Capital Improvement Program for general aviation airports. 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 four objectives, in order of importance, assigned by the Texas Transportation Commission are:

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

ROUTINE AIRPORT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The Routine Airport Maintenance Program assists airports to fund eligible maintenance activities to preserve investments in airport infrastructure. TxDOT provides Routine Airport Maintenance Program grants using state funds to help facilitate maintenance and improvements for lower-cost airside and landside needs. The grants may be used for runway and taxiway pavement and lighting, security fencing, automated weather observing systems, and fueling systems.
**TxDOT FLIGHT SERVICES**

State law authorizes and requires TxDOT to operate and maintain the state’s aircraft fleet. As the administrator of the state’s aircraft fleet, TxDOT provides low-cost and efficient travel to all state officials, state agency employees, and sponsored contractors traveling on official state business. The state aircraft fleet currently includes four planes for passenger services and two planes for special-purpose projects, such as aerial photography surveying and emergency operations. In 2019, the Texas Legislature instructed TxDOT to retire the aging state fleet of passenger aircraft, all of which were well over 20 years old, and replace them with state-of-the-art turbofan powered aircraft. The new aircraft, now in operation, provides a significant improvement in performance — effectively reducing overall operating costs while significantly improving flight safety and time efficiency for the state.

Additionally, TxDOT provides aircraft maintenance, fuel, and other services as required for aircraft owned and operated by other state agencies, including the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and some higher education institutions.

The Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program, the newest function of the TxDOT Flight Services, aims to fully integrate UAS into TxDOT’s critical operations to increase cost savings and efficiency by equipping TxDOT districts and divisions to utilize UAS as a tool for data collection, project development, and emergency operations. The program, established in partnership with Austin Community College, will provide certain TxDOT employees with Federal Aviation Administration certified pilot training to become Unmanned Aircraft Systems pilots, as well as specific training tailored to meet TxDOT needs. Once licensed, TxDOT UAS pilots will oversee Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the field; operations include bridge and tower inspections, right of way and pavement surveys, and incident management. The inaugural cohort of TxDOT UAS pilots graduated in May 2022.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The national air transportation system is an economic driver that facilitates connections between people, communities, and businesses. Because of Texas’ size, air transportation is particularly significant in the state.

The Texas economy benefits from a high-quality network of publicly accessible airports supporting general aviation activities. 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. A 2018 study of the economic impacts of general aviation in Texas by 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. General aviation aircraft also support emergency medical transportation, law enforcement, agriculture applications, aerial firefighting, and disaster response throughout the state.

Additionally, the consolidation of several legacy airlines in recent years dramatically affected airline service for smaller cities. Subsequently, many businesses have chosen to purchase and operate their own general aviation aircraft to meet their air transportation needs and access areas of the state without commercial service aviation access.

The size of Texas and the distances between population centers make air travel a vital mode of transportation in the state. 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 System Plan will remain an integral part of transportation planning for Texas. TxDOT’s Texas Airport System Plan provides the path for that development. The plan focuses on the general aviation airports that provide capacity to the system in urban areas and those serving the state’s smaller communities. Today, most communities recognize that local airports are essential to attracting business development for their local economies.

[Aircraft Travel for Official State Business](https://www.txdot.gov/government/programs/sharing.html)
AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Aviation Advisory Committee provides input to TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Commission (Commission) on aviation development programs and other aviation matters and serves as a representative of aviation users in the state. The Aviation Advisory Committee consists of nine members who serve three-year terms who are appointed by the Commission. A majority of the members of the committee must have five years of successful experience as an aircraft pilot, an aircraft facilities manager, or a fixed-base operator.

TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM MAP

https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/aviation/advisory.html

 CONNECTING YOU WITH TEXAS

RESOURCES

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.

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TxDOT’s complete 2023-2024 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.

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD
STRATEGIC GOALS
TxDOT’s performance dashboard provides a transparent way to show how we are doing as an agency. We highlight performance measures related to the seven strategic goals that guide our mission of Connecting You with Texas: Promote Safety, Optimize System Performance, Preserve Our Assets, Deliver the Right Projects, Focus on the Customer, Foster Stewardship and Value Our Employees.

TxDOT is committed to your safety and to the reliability of the information contained on this site. While road conditions can change rapidly, DriveTexas.org is an industry leader in providing some of the most accurate and up-to-date travel-related information currently available to drivers in Texas. Information presented here is as close to real time as possible. For those who use our roads, please do not use this site while operating a motor vehicle.

Be Safe. Drive Smart. Thank you!