

WINGTIPS

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OF TRANSPORTATION
AVIATION DIVISION.

SPECIAL CONFERENCE EDITION

FULTON RETIRES AFTER 27 YEARS OF SERVICE

p. 15



SUMMER 2019



DAVE'S HANGAR: FINAL EDITION

Well the day has finally come for me to “depart the pattern.” After 44 years in state aviation, first in Tennessee and then Texas, it is time for me to retire as Director of TxDOT’s Aviation Division (AVN) and give someone else the opportunity. When I left Tennessee on May 15, 1992, to join the newly created Aviation Division as their first director, there is no way I could have ever imagined that I would be there for 27 years. But without question, coming to Texas was one of the best decisions that I ever made.

Shortly after I arrived, I drove all over the state to take a look at the Texas general aviation (GA) airport system. Compared to Tennessee, I was shocked to see what poor condition most of the airports were in, particularly in the rural parts of the state. As I spent time with AVN staff, I also learned that our state airport improvement grant budget for the entire year was \$1.4M, which was funding to support about 278 GA airports statewide.

However, after seeing the professionalism, dedication and commitment of the AVN staff, I said to myself, “This is going to be a lot of fun.” And it has been. Somehow, we figured out how to get the funding we needed and spent the next 27 years transforming the Texas GA system from one of the worst in the nation to one of the best.

No question the job was a challenge and still is today. Few people understand the true value of community airports, particularly to the rural areas of the state. They have not had the opportunity that I have to see new companies moving into cities and counties and creating jobs, with the local airport playing a major role.

As I leave, it is not easy to say goodbye to the fantastic staff of AVN and all of you that I have worked with over the years, many of whom have become good friends. Thank you for your belief in, and support of, GA airports in Texas. I hope to have the opportunity to visit with you next spring in Galveston at the Texas Aviation Conference. 🍷



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37TH ANNUAL TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE SOARS IN GALVESTON

The second of three consecutive Texas Aviation Conferences in Galveston took place on April 16-18 at Moody Gardens Hotel.

The 37th edition of the conference saw aviation professionals, supporters, exhibitors and enthusiasts collaborate and engage in a number of critical general aviation issues. The conference is sponsored by the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Aviation Division.

The first-day activities included the 10th Annual Alton Young Memorial Motorcycle Ride, which followed along a scenic coastal route. Young was an Aviation Division employee who passed away in 2010. Other opening-day activities included a golf tournament and a get-acquainted reception in the exhibit hall in the evening. ■

OPENING SESSION

On the second day, the opening session began with a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem performed by Jenny Lanier. Then, TxDOT Aviation Division Director David Fulton greeted the attendees and introduced Galveston City Manager Brian Maxwell, who welcomed the audience to Galveston and thanked TxDOT for their service and help with improvements to their airport. Fulton then delivered his State of the Division Address. ■

STATE OF THE DIVISION ADDRESS

Fulton began his presentation by revisiting the division's mission statement: *Promote, develop, maintain and protect an air transportation infrastructure that provides for the safe and efficient airborne movement of people, goods and services within Texas and provides access to the global air network.*

"I think it's always good to take the time to refocus on what we're really trying to achieve," said Fulton. "Our job is to work with each of you to develop and maintain your airports to meet your air transportation needs. It's an important job as it may have an impact on the economic health of your area."

Fulton then spoke about airport improvement grant funding.

"Our job is getting harder every day as the level of funding has not changed for a long time while the cost of construction has continued to rise," noted Fulton. "Anyone who has taken on an airport improvement project in the last few years is well aware of that fact."

According to Fulton, for fiscal year (FY) 2018 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding was a total of \$60,710,492 million,

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while State Airport Improvement funding was a total of \$19,175,710. The total airport grant funding for FY18 was \$79,886,202.

“While nearly \$80 million dollars in funding may sound like a lot of money, with 278 general aviation airports in our statewide system, we simply can no longer adequately meet the needs of our airports in a timely manner.” said Fulton. “As a result, we are having to reduce project scopes to a bare minimum, combine routine maintenance projects into groups to save money and delay projects until later years.”

Fulton then noted there was an opportunity to receive money from the AIP 2018-2020 Omnibus Bill funding, which provided an

additional one billion dollars for FAA airport improvement grant funds that remain available until September 2020.

Rounding out his morning’s address, Fulton showed charts that explained the effects of construction cost increases, and he then addressed two aviation related bills in the 86th Texas Legislature: Senate Bills 2050 by Senator Charles Schwertner and 1964 by Senator Judith Zaffirini.

The State of the Division address concluded with Fulton introducing new members of the Aviation Division staff to the conference attendees. 🍷



Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Chairman Jim Schwertner and member Shelly deZevallos.

AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE PANEL

Following the State of the Aviation Division address, the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee convened for a presentation with a question and answer session. To kick off the presentation, a seven-minute video called “The Value and Impact of Texas General Aviation” was shown and featured employees within the Aviation Division explaining their mission and the value of general aviation in Texas. The video may be viewed at: https://youtu.be/_OWKn09HfOg.

The committee members were then introduced by Aviation Division Director of

Grants Kari Campbell, who also explained how the committee was appointed and their roles and responsibilities.

“Each of the members has a very impressive background and credentials in general aviation,” noted Campbell.

Then the members each spoke about their experience and responsibilities as part of the committee. Chairman Jim Schwertner from Austin spoke first and emphasized the importance of general aviation to the economic health of the community.

“This discussion was really important for my understanding of how we relate to this committee. Do it again!”

– Conference attendee

“If you aren’t familiar with the General Aviation Economic Impact study that was released last year, I urge each of you to visit the TxDOT website, find your county or town, and see the economic

impact general aviation has for your community,” said Schwertner. “And then share this information with your mayor, city manager or members of the city council. It’s unbelievable the amount of data that is available. Most people in counties or cities don’t understand how important general aviation is to the economic impact relative to our great state. It’s your job to help us get the message out there to help educate folks as to what would happen if that airport went away.”

Following remarks from each member, the committee took questions from the audience. ■

GENERAL AVIATION INDUSTRY OUTLOOK AND WASHINGTON UPDATE

Next up was an update from Washington – President and CEO of the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) Shelly Simi and Government Relations Manager of NASAO John Shea.

Simi provided an overview of NASAO, including the history, purpose and why the organization is unique.

“As part of our member services, we have an online aviation training program,” said Simi. “This program allows state employees to gain a fundamental

understanding of the aviation industry and build upon their knowledge-base.”

The program has seven modules, such as being aware of the airport environment and aviation planning 101.

Simi also spoke about the upcoming NASAO conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, September 7-11, 2019, and gave a congressional update.

Shea spoke next about the FAA reauthorization bill and expansion of the state block grant program.

“The cap on the State Block Grant program, which allows states to assume responsibility for administering AIP grant funding to non-primary airports, was increased from ten to twenty states,” said Shea. “Several states have expressed interest in learning more and possibly joining the State Block Grant program.

Jens Hennig, Vice President-Operations, General Aviation Manufacturers Association, rounded out the session with a general aviation industry outlook. ■

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

This year’s keynote speaker was Aron Ralston. An experienced climber and avid outdoorsman, Ralston was canyoneering alone in Utah when he became trapped between two boulders in a remote location for more than five days – ultimately freeing himself by severing his own arm with a pocketknife. His harrowing tale captivated global news outlets and remains one of the most incredible and extreme survival stories of all time.

In his keynote, Ralston brought his gripping story to life – and the audience to the edge of their seats. With great candor and humility, he reflected on his remarkable triumph over insurmountable odds and shared the lessons he learned about the importance of examining one’s priorities and outlook on life.

“There was a point where I realized I was no longer standing in the bottom of a canyon, I was standing in my grave,” said Ralston. “So what do you do? I got in my backpack and pulled out my video camera and turned it on and recorded a message to my mom and dad and told them I was sorry and that I loved them. As sad and somber as it was at the moment, it was revealing who it was I was saying goodbye to. In that moment, the boulder gave me my first gift. Boulders, which can be burdens, can also be blessings.”

Texas Aviation Conference keynote speaker Aron Ralston.



Ralston's recounted his ordeal in his *New York Times* best-selling book, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, which inspired the major motion picture, *127 Hours*, starring James Franco.

"When I finally escaped from being trapped under that boulder, I was thankful for the experience," said Ralston. "It gave me a true appreciation for life and the value of relationships. And that's what I want each of you to do...challenge yourself to work on overcoming life's obstacles; our 'boulders' that we all face in our lives."

"Fantastic! I was very excited to see Aron on the agenda and he did not disappoint. Thank you for going the extra mile to bring in top-notch speakers!"

— Conference attendee

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The afternoon breakout sessions featured timely and relevant topics to general aviation professionals.

"We have a few sessions that we repeat every year, but most of them are new ideas that we get from conference evaluations or talking with industry professionals," said Texas A&M Transportation Institute Research Scientist and co-conference planner Jeff Borowiec. ■

BREAKOUT SESSION I

Airport Manager's Roundtable

This was the eighth consecutive year the popular airport manager's roundtable has appeared on the agenda. During this session, attendees have an open forum to ask questions and engage a panel of experienced managers. This year's panel included Eric Pratt, Airport General Manager, Mesquite Metro Airport; James Brown, Airport Director, Conroe North Houston Regional Airport; and Camilla Viator, City Manager and Airport Manager, Madisonville Municipal Airport.

Brown emphasized the need to engage the community and county government officials with airport activities and planning. Brown's airport has seen tremendous growth in the past few years, and he shared his experiences with managing large scale projects.

"This is always a valuable session to attend. I appreciate the range of airport sizes and experience that is represented."

— Conference attendee

Viator is a new comer to airport management, and she related her experiences with "learning on the fly" in addition to her duties as Madisonville City Manager.

"Take full advantage of the resources available to you," Viator said. "Whether it be TxDOT Aviation staff or consultants, don't be afraid to ask for help and seek advice from others with experience. I've found that everyone is very happy and willing to help out."

Promoting Your Airport in Your Community and Beyond

Sharlette Wright, Airport Manager, Cleburne Regional Airport, led a session on promoting general aviation airports, both for aviators and the general public. In her session, Wright spoke about what to do when budget is an issue.

"Take advantage of free social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram," said Wright. "I also speak at local community organizations such as Rotary, Lions Club and other leadership groups."

Wright stressed hosting events at your airport that involves the community, such as hosting field trips, fly-ins and pancake breakfasts. She also suggested having a "camera at the ready" to capture unique

events at the airport for posting on social media.

Addressing Environmental Issues at Your Airport

Amy Foster, TxDOT, Aviation Division, suggested addressing environmental issues at your airport. The session's goal was to answer pressing questions such as: What is the "environmental process," and why do we have to do it? What are the most common environmental issues on general aviation airport projects in Texas? Which are most likely to affect a project's budget and timeline, and what can we do about it?

"You should consider known environmental factors in early master planning efforts for proposed airport development projects," said Foster. "It is important to identify obvious, specially-protected environmental resources, such as federally-listed endangered species, historic properties, wetlands, and parkland during the development's conceptual phase when the greatest range of alternatives exists. Don't be blindsided!"

Foster also gave examples of which projects and impacts tended to be the most complicated and what an airport sponsor could do to better prepare for such events. ■

BREAKOUT SESSION II

Airport Planning Studies: Which One is Best for My Airport?

The TxDOT Aviation Division Planning and Programming Staff led this informative session to help airport sponsors understand the purposes and differences of each type of study to identify which approach is best suited for their airport.

During the presentation, it was noted the goals and outcomes that come from planning projects, which include:

- Provide a graphic representation of existing airport features, future airport development and anticipated land use;
- Establish a realistic schedule for implementation of the proposed development;
- Identify a realistic financial plan to support the development;
- Validate the plan technically and procedurally through investigation of concepts and alternatives on technical, economic and environmental grounds;
- Prepare and present a plan to the public that adequately addresses all relevant issues and satisfies local, state and federal regulations; and

- Establish a framework for a continuous planning process.

The staff also reported that airport planning studies range in size and function depending on the airport's facilities and needs, and each plan should be tailored to fit the individual needs of the airport.

Airport Weather Forecasts

Sean Luchs, National Weather Service Houston/Galveston, and Andy McNeel, National Weather Service, Center Weather Service Unit Houston, addressed topics that include how airport forecasts are made, how National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) interacts with the Center Weather Service Unit at George Bush Intercontinental Airport, resources available to the aviation community and the anticipated evolution of services.

"These requirements are a part of the FAA NextGen initiative and integrate aviation forecasting with the rest of our forecast," explained Luchs. "This increases consistency, and creates new ceiling and visibility grids for National Digital Forecast Initiative which can be used for General Aviation airports, en-route flight information, and other non-aviation purposes."

Pavement Maintenance and Drainage Issues at Your Airport

Harry Lorton, Scoping Engineer, TxDOT, Aviation Division and Tom Freeman, Pavement Management Program Manager, Texas A&M Transportation Institute covered the important topic of managing and maintaining the pavements at our airports. This session included a discussion of the pavement inspection process at airports, as well as profile and deflection testing along with maintenance and repair recommendations.

"Maintenance is the most cost-effective way to extend pavement life," said Lorton. "It also reduces the total cost of pavement preservation."

Freeman explained the process behind rating pavements at airports and the major distresses.

"Edge cracking and encroachment, block cracking and weathering and raveling are all examples of the distresses I see," said Freeman. "Encroachment from weeds and grasses along the edge of the pavement is a big problem. It causes cracking and reduces the pavement width. It may be fixed with mowing, herbicide or grading." ■

RAMP SESSION

RAMP Program Manager Amy Slaughter presented an overview of the Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP), which matches local government expenses up to \$50,000 for airside and landside maintenance. In her presentation, Slaughter used a QR code survey to quiz participants on what is eligible for RAMP funding.

"Under RAMP, sponsors may partner with a local TxDOT district office to perform crack sealing, fog sealing and/or herbicide application," said Slaughter while going over the quiz answers. "The sponsor submits an estimated matching share before work begins. The district charges material and labor to the RAMP grant."

Slaughter also noted which items are not eligible for RAMP, such as courtesy cars or any maintenance to any vehicle or equipment; fuel filters, jet fuel or any other consumables like batteries or indoor replacement light bulbs; work performed before the grant is executed; and carpet cleaning, utility bills, security system monitoring or other operating costs. ■

"Amy does a great job with the RAMP program!"

— Conference attendee

EVENING AWARDS BANQUET

The evening awards banquet, held on the second evening of the conference, provided a time for the Aviation Division to honor those individuals and airports who excelled in the past year. The winners from the Aviation Art Contest are also recognized for their outstanding art work.

Since 1989, the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale has sponsored the International Aviation Art Contest to challenge young people to illustrate the importance of aviation through art. Demonstrating the impact of aeronautics through an interactive, fun medium such as art motivates youth of all ages to become more familiar with aeronautics, engineering and science. Children between the ages of 6 and 17 may participate.

This year was a special year for the Texas art contest. Quanjie Dai, placed 2nd in the national contest and placed 3rd in the international competition. Dai is a student at Calhoun High School in Port Lavaca. Congratulations Quanjie!

Also at the evening's award ceremony, a video tribute to Wayne Collins was played. Collins died January 27 at his home in Mineola. 🖼️

TEXAS AVIATION AWARDS

1 RAMP Coordinator of the Year

The RAMP Coordinator of the Year Award is determined one of two ways – from a coordinator with many years of dedication or a coordinator who has had an outstanding year.

Javier Molinar, Odessa District, has worked with Texas airports in his district for a little over 10 years as a special crews department head and then recently as the official RAMP coordinator.

Despite having a heavy workload with 11 airports, Molinar has a reputation for always being responsive to requests from the airports in his district. On a recent crack seal project, he inspected and followed up with city and TxDOT planning staff on his recommendations. After he recommended adding the work to the district's crack seal contract, he attended the preconstruction meeting and provided guidance and clarity for stakeholders. The project has resulted in the extended usability of the airfield pavement until funding to rehabilitate becomes available.

An airport sponsor describes Molinar as professional and prompt to respond to him when he calls regarding questions about

the airport. He considers him a valuable asset to TxDOT because of his work ethic.

2 General Aviation Airport Manager of the Year

This year's winner, **Mike Geer** from Aransas County Airport, immediately hit the ground running when he was hired at the airport.

Geer completed the Airport Master Plan making the airport grant eligible for many years to come. He developed a Customer Resource Management program, wherein raw data is collected from aviation based tourism, then formatted and communicated to local business owners in an effort to demonstrate the value of a high functioning airport within the community.

But nearly two years ago, an event happened that changed everything.

August 25, 2017, is a day that the local residents will never forget. It was the day Hurricane Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, made landfall at peak intensity at this airport with winds of 130 mph becoming the first major hurricane to make landfall in the United States since Wilma in 2005.

When Geer emerged from the terminal building, where he had stayed the night

riding out the storm with his staff and a few family members, total devastation greeted them.

In all, nine hangars were destroyed, including four box hangars and five nests of T-hangars, for a total of more than 100,000 square feet of space. Extensive damage was done to the electrical infrastructure. An entire plane was lost that was later found mangled against a game fence on the other side of the airport.

Geer and his staff went straight to work, first clearing the primary runway of debris and then communicating with state and federal agencies that the airport was open to helicopter operations within 24 hours. They then got word to the same agencies that the airport was open and could sustain daytime fixed-wing operations within 72 hours. Currently, the airport is up and running at about 90% from an airport services standpoint and are back to normal on fuel delivery services.

3 Reliever Airport Manager of the Year

Simply put, this year's reliever airport manager of the year winner, **Aaron Barth**, Assistant Airport System Director at City of Fort Worth, is a consummate professional.



Barth started his career at the airport in 2009 as airport manager and in this capacity, he has lead numerous efforts to strengthen the airport's role in the Texas Airport System.

Barth has taken leadership roles throughout his tenure, from updating the airport's minimum standards, to leading a multiagency taskforce, to coordinating the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems near airports. In addition to his daily duties at the airport, he is an active leader in the airport industry.

Barth and his staff are dedicated to making the airport a first class facility and are proactive when it comes to airport development. Each year, he conducts a comprehensive 5-Year Airport Capital Improvement Plan review. Over the course of the last two years, he has secured over \$5 Million in grant awards to make necessary safety and design improvements to the airport. Furthermore, in 2018, the airport implemented a Pavement Management Program to further protect the investment in airfield pavement.

He is also extremely business savvy and has lead the airport to being financially self-sustainable for the first time in its history. He led an effort in 2017 to gain 100% federal funding for the Air Traffic Control Tower based on increased air traffic activity. He has also been efficient in the use of gas well revenue to balance the airports budget through revenue-producing ventures and has used public private partnerships to help fund the construction of a fire station to service the airport and nearby city.

4 Most Improved Airport of the Year

The **Angelina County Airport** in Lufkin epitomizes true teamwork, as they utilized their available resources to completely revamp an airport that is popular for business aviation, training, and recreational flying.

Two years ago, using an airport improvement program grant, the airport began an ambitious project to improve their pavement surfaces. They removed and reinstalled portions of their taxiway and asphalt around their existing hangars. Then they performed crack sealing on all remaining taxiway and runway surfaces that were not replaced.

To finish off their new pavement, all taxiways and both runways were repainted. Making sure this work was built to last, extensive drainage improvements were made that included the installation of French drains around the taxiway and T-hangars, and the replacement of an inadequate drainage culvert on the entrance road with a box culvert to remove water from airport grounds

Visitors to the airport have taken notice of this airport's impressive list of improvements, noting in their AirNav comments:

"The staff is friendly and helpful. There is reasonably priced fuel and good food at the Airport Cafe. The pilot lounge is comfortable and quiet. The bathrooms are clean and well kept. Couldn't ask for more."

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AROUND THE CONFERENCE



1 Harry Lorton, Scoping Engineer, TxDOT, Aviation Division during the Pavement Maintenance and Drainage Issues at Your Airport breakout session.

2 Aviation Division Planner and conference emcee Bill Macke.

3 Eric Pratt, Airport General Manager, Mesquite Metro Airport; James Brown, Airport Director, Conroe North Houston Regional Airport; and Camilla Viator, City Manager and Airport Manager, Madisonville Municipal Airport, at the Airport Manager's Roundtable.

4 Kari Campbell, Director, Grant Management and Administration.

5 Aviation Division Section heads Kari Campbell, Director, Grant Management and Administration; Greg Miller, Director, Planning and Programming; and Eusebio Torres, Director, Engineering Project Management.

6 RAMP Coordinator Amy Slaughter.





General Aviation Airport of the Year

To say that **Texas Gulf Coast Regional Airport** has consistently provided great service to tenants and the community while facing down several catastrophic events would be an understatement.

In 2016, historic flooding in central Texas made its way downstream to the airport. When the river finally crested, it was at record levels, causing flooding at the airport and the eventual temporary closure. The airport entry road was underwater for a week. To get to the airport to assess damage, Airport Manager Jeff Bilyeu relied on local officials to ferry him via airboat. Knowing the importance of keeping their tenants apprised of the airport's current status, he posted continuous updates, along with photos and videos to their Facebook page.

In 2017, the arrival of Hurricane Harvey saw more flooding at the airport. To help prevent such future flooding, the Airport and County paid for realignment of drainage and construction of drainage ditches.

Many aviation businesses operate out of the airport, including Dow Chemical and Buc-ee's, with both having based aircraft at the airport.

No airport does it alone, as our award winning airport certainly receives remarkable support from county officials. One of the officials noted "A thriving county airport is an important asset to the county. While some view it as a luxury for the big corporations and county elite, it can be a valuable resource to grow and support the local economy." ■

AVIATION ART CONTEST WINNERS

CATEGORY I (AGES 6–9)

- 1st Place: **Diya Vermireddy**, McCoy Elementary, Carrollton, TX
- 2nd Place: **Akshaya Obilisetty**, Hobby Center Dallas, McKinney, TX
- 3rd Place: **Kashmira Kuloor**, McCoy Elementary, Carrollton, TX
- Honorable Mention: **Tanishq Verma**, Hobby Center Dallas, McKinney, TX

CATEGORY II (AGES 10–13)

- 1st Place: **Maya Hopson**, Danny Jones Middle School, Mansfield, TX
- 2nd Place: **Sanjana Anand**, Hobby Center Dallas, McKinney, TX
- 3rd Place: **Chloe Ward**, Danny Jones Middle School, Mansfield, TX

CATEGORY III (AGES 14–17)

- 1st Place: **Quanjie Dai**, Calhoun High School, Port Lavaca, TX
- 2nd Place: **Kelly Xu**, Calhoun High School, Port Lavaca, TX
- 3rd Place: **Yiru Zhou**, McKamy Middle School, Flower Mound, TX

Quanjie Dai accepts her blue ribbon for winning first place. Dai also placed 2nd in the national contest and placed 3rd in the international competition. NBAA Manager Steve Hadley is presenting the award.



2020 AVIATION ART CONTEST NOW ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

The theme of the 2020 Aviation Art Contest is “Flying Yesterday and Tomorrow.”

The dream to fly is thousands of years old. Ancient stories from around the world tell us of those who wanted to take flight. Their stories of successes and failures started to become reality in the late 1800s, when men and women used the growing technological know-how to build the craft that, up until then, had only been possible in our dreams.

It is time to get out your favorite artist supplies and give free rein to your imagination to create your work that combines the flights of the past with the dreams of the future in this year’s “Flying yesterday and tomorrow” art contest.

Entries must be sent to:

Becky Vick
150 E. Riverside Dr.
Austin, Texas 78704
Becky.Vick@txdot.gov
Phone (512) 416-4504

and must be postmarked by January 17, 2020

Age Categories

Group I - Junior Category

Born between 1 January 2010 & 31 December 2013

Group II - Intermediate Category

Born between 1 January 2006 & 31 December 2009

Group III - Senior Category

Born between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2005

Entries in each age group are judged and state winners and runners-up are selected. The top three entries in each age group are forwarded to Washington, DC to be judged in the national competition.

For more information, please visit <https://nasao.org/page/international-aviation-art-contest>.

FINAL DAY SESSIONS

The final day of the Texas Aviation Conference concluded with an urban air mobility presentation, Aviation Division Section Director's forum and a TxDOT/FAA AIP program and listening session. ■

URBAN AIR MOBILITY, NASA'S GRAND CHALLENGE AND THE TEXAS VISION

Michael Sanders, Executive Director, Lone Star UAS, and Center of Excellence and Innovation, spoke about NASA's concept for a possible UAS Traffic Management (UTM) System that would safely manage diverse UAS Operations in the airspace above buildings and below crewed aircraft operations in suburban and urban areas.

"Currently, there is no established infrastructure to enable and safely manage the widespread use of low-altitude airspace and

UAS operations, regardless of the type of UAS," said Sanders. "A UTM system for low-altitude airspace may be needed, perhaps leveraging concepts from the system of roads, lanes, stop signs, rules and lights that govern vehicles on the ground today, whether the vehicles are driven by humans or are automated. NASA is researching prototype technologies for a UTM system that could develop airspace integration requirements for enabling safe, efficient low-altitude operations." ■

AVIATION DIVISION SECTION DIRECTOR'S FORUM

New to this year's conference was the Aviation Division Section Director's forum. Kari Campbell, Director, Grant Management and Administration; Greg Miller, Director, Planning and Programming; and Eusebio Torres, Director, Engineering Project Management; provided an overview of their respective sections and introduced members of their staff. After their presentation, a brief question and answer session followed.

"This really could have been a much longer session," said Campbell. "We had some great questions from our audience, and it was good to engage everyone – not only to provide information on topics such as the project planning process, but also take questions on specific sponsor concerns." ■

"Really well done. Good overview of how the process works, and who does what."

– Conference attendee

TXDOT/FAA AIP PROGRAM AND LISTENING SESSION

Gary Loftus, Program Manager, Regional Airports Compliance, FAA Southwest Region, presented on common regional airport compliance issues.

"Hangar use infractions are the number one highest reported," said Loftus. "Sponsors may adopt more restrictive policies however, FAA will generally not call foul if items in hangar do not impede movement of aircraft into/out of hangar and if items in hangar do not impede access to aircraft stored in the hangar."

Dave Fulton, Director, TxDOT, Aviation Division; Terry Biggio, Regional Administrator, FAA Southwest Region and Ben Guttery, Manager, Texas Airports Development Office, FAA Southwest Region; then led their traditional conference closing listening session.

"This is always a good way to wrap up the conference and address any questions or comments that were not covered in an earlier session," noted Fulton. ■

"Outstanding conference! Congratulations to the TxDOT staff for putting on such a good conference. It's obvious a lot of planning went into this."

– Conference attendee



IT'S BEEN A HECK OF A LOT OF FUN! AVIATION DIVISION DIRECTOR DAVID FULTON RETIRES

When David Fulton joined TxDOT in June of 1993, after a 16-year career with the Tennessee Office of Aeronautics (TAC)—ten of those years as agency director—it was at a time when general aviation (GA) in Texas was supported by a small but dedicated staff at the Texas Aeronautics Commission. With quiet enthusiasm and strong leadership, Dave began the arduous task to transform the Texas public GA airport system into the best in the country.

For over 11 years, Dave was a naval officer with pilot designation; he was captain of a 17-person crew in the military version of the Lockheed Electra and was assigned a variety of duties, including administrative officer, personnel officer and operations officer for a 360-member squadron. He was also a naval flight instructor and a squadron standardization officer.

While serving as Aviation Director in Tennessee, Dave was well versed in

state and federal legislative processes, having testified frequently before state and congressional committees on aviation issues. He is also past president (1986) of the National Association of State Aviation Officials.

Dave graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1958 with a B.S. degree in civil engineering. He earned an MBA from the University of Tennessee in 1979 and holds a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Nashville School of Law. Upon receiving his J.D., he was licensed to practice law in Tennessee.

When Dave moved to Texas, after a short time the TAC was absorbed into TxDOT. A commission of only 30 plus personnel being folded into an organization of thousands with offices all over the state had its risks, but also offered the opportunity to begin rebuilding and improving GA in Texas.

Dave navigated this transition with a simple up-front policy. Show the TxDOT leaders the value of GA to Texas

firsthand. Flying senior staff around the state to meet with county judges, commissioners, mayors and airport managers, Dave helped all parties appreciate the value of aviation in this large state as well as what resources are necessary to make the airport system work for Texans - time, talent and money.

Now the TxDOT Aviation Division (AVN) is well placed in the TxDOT hierarchy. TxDOT grant money is allocated for airport improvements along with the federal airport fund grant money. Most Texas publicly owned airports qualify for up to a 90% funding grant for improvements. Those few airports in the state that do not qualify for federal funds are eligible state grant funds.

Dave and the AVN staff worked hard to make the funding system flexible to individual airport needs. RAMP - Routine Airport Maintenance Program - money is a state grant to public airports created by AVN to let local airport

managers spend up to \$50,000 a year on whatever is needed to improve the appearance, service, or just maintain the basic infrastructure - fences, gates, mowers, small storage structures, etc.

Dave also began a program to build, improve or replace terminal buildings. "An airport without a decent terminal has no point of focus for airport operations," Fulton often said. Creative, locally-designed structures reflecting the unique nature of the community has produced beautiful, and functional, terminal buildings.

Dave strongly supported state system economic impact studies for all publicly funded Texas airports, the most recent one conducted by CDM Smith, KSA Engineers, and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. From the 2018 survey, the economic impact of GA for Texas is \$94 billion and nearly 779, 000 jobs. "If aviation supports Texas, then Texas has to support aviation," was another of Fulton's sayings.

In 2017, he received the most prestigious award the FAA issues to pilots, The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. Fulton was presented the award by Randy Loveless from FAA's San Antonio Flight Standards District

Office during the 2017 Texas Aviation Conference. The award is named after the Wright Brothers, the first U.S. pilots, to recognize individuals who have exhibited professionalism, skill and aviation expertise for at least 50 years while piloting aircraft as "Master Pilots."

On June 27, colleagues, friends and family gathered at Fiesta Gardens in Austin to celebrate the legacy of Dave Fulton. Aviation Advisory Chairman Jim Schwertner was the master of ceremonies.

"Dave, it's been a real pleasure working with you," said Schwertner. "There are a lot of people in this room who appreciate you, and I hope you stick around and help with the Advisory Committee because we need your guidance, leadership and friendship."

Ken Kooch with the Texas Aviation Association spoke next about Dave's legacy.

"Thank you so very much, Dave Fulton," said Kooch. "For over 27 years, Dave has provided exemplary aviation leadership for the state of Texas. It was a monumental task that he took on when he began his career, and he was the right person for the job."

Sharlette Wright, Texas Airports Council President, thanked Fulton for his unwavering support and leadership for general aviation advocacy throughout the state. NBAA Director of Regional Programs Steven Hadley also spoke and presented Dave with their Silk Scarf Award.

AVN Section Directors then took turns reading a plaque from the entire staff of AVN.

"Whose influence, as an encourager and mentor to his team and to aviation leaders across America is immeasurable," said Kari Campbell, Director, Grant Management and Administration, of Fulton's leadership. "Whose unshakeable voice of reason in any storm and unparalleled ability to accomplish any task have all been keys to our success."

"People always ask me why I've stuck around so long, and the answer is simple. It's been a heck of a lot of fun," said Fulton. "I've been fortunate enough to be surrounded by wonderful, dedicated colleagues who I owe so much to, and also my wife Charlotte who has always supported me." ■



INHOFE, KING INTRODUCE PLANE ACT TO ENABLE THE NEXT ERA OF AVIATION

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Sen. Angus King (I-Maine), introduced the Promoting the Launch of Aviation's Next Era (PLANE) Act of 2019. This bipartisan legislation would empower the voices of pilots, invest in airport infrastructure and ensure more opportunities for a trained aviation workforce.

"The PLANE Act truly sets a positive path for the future of the aviation industry," Inhofe said. "This legislation enhances legal protections for pilots that must contend with the federal bureaucracy, requires additional transparency when FAA makes decisions impacting aviation stakeholders and promotes investment at general aviation airports – the backbone of our national aviation system. It would also secure the future of aviation by ensuring the air traffic controllers and FAA designees our aviation community depends on have access to

needed opportunities for training and development.

"This bill would provide the opportunity for general aviation airports to be designated disaster relief airports to better support community disaster response and recovery efforts. After the recent flooding and tornadoes in our state, Oklahoma knows all too well the need for improved infrastructure when responding to natural disasters. I'm pleased my legislation will give this additional support to communities in our state and across the country. Finally, all aviation user fees should go to support the aviation community, and this bill would correct the diversion of aviation fuel taxes that supports non-aviation infrastructure."

"For rural Maine communities, general aviation is a vital lifeline – both literally and economically," said King. "This legislation would make important investments in this pillar of our nation's transportation system and would cut through bureaucratic

burdens, so these airports, the men and women who operate them, and the pilots who travel to and from them can continue providing vital services to rural Maine people. This is an important, bipartisan bill that will help power local economies and ensure all Maine people can access lifesaving medical care when facing an emergency."

The bill has the strong support of stakeholders in the pilot community and general aviation industry. In a letter touting the introduction of this bill, stakeholders from across the entire community wrote:

"The bipartisan PLANE Act sets the stage for the future of general aviation by empowering the voices of pilots, investing in airport infrastructure, and ensuring more opportunities for a trained aviation workforce... We believe this legislation should be enacted to promote the launch of aviation's next era for the benefit of the entire aviation community." ■

CENTRAL TEXAS AIRTANKER BASE ACTIVATED TO HELP FIGHT WILDFIRES ACROSS THE STATE

Texas A&M Forest Service is opening the Austin Airtanker Base at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport to assist with increased wildfire activity across the state.

Significant fire activity has increased recently, particularly in northwest Texas, Central Texas and the Cross Timbers region where hot and dry conditions persist and fuel loading is high. Critical fuel dryness is expanding across South

Texas, the Hill Country and Rolling Plains as rainfall deficits continue to build across large portions of the state.

During periods of high fire activity, aviation resources are used to support suppression efforts on the ground, aiding in the protection of structures and other valuable resources. "This year, we've utilized helicopters and single engine air tankers for wildfire response in areas with increased wildfire activity," said Cynthia Foster, Texas A&M Forest Service Planning

and Preparedness Department Head.

"However, we could have a large, intense fire at any time, so we want to be prepared and have additional aircraft ready to respond."

The base is equipped to handle all aircraft in the national airtanker fleet, including those aircraft used to drop fire retardant during wildfires. The base will be manned by trained and qualified Texas A&M Forest Service, USDA Forest Service and Austin Fire Department firefighting personnel. ■

NEW FAA REGULATIONS REQUIRE TOWERS UNDER 200 FT. TO BE MARKED

New FAA regulations require landowners to mark any towers between 50 and 200 ft. on their property, as well as include the towers in a new database the FAA is developing.

Previously, towers under 200 ft. were not subject to any federal marking requirements, according to officials with the National Agricultural Aviation Association. The new requirements are due to provisions in the FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016 and the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018.

Under the provisions in these laws, meteorological evaluation towers (METs) meeting the requirements stipulated in the bills must be both marked and logged in to the FAA database. Communication towers of the same size have the option to be either be marked or logged in the FAA database.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 requires this database to be functional by October 2019. The FAA is also finalizing the marking requirements for these towers, but they are expected to be similar to the standards found in FAA Advisory Circular 70/7460-1L.

“From a safety perspective, being transparent about the existence of low-level obstacles is vital to agricultural pilots and other aircraft flying in the airspace between zero and 400 ft., such as police and first responder aircraft, aerial firefighters and pipeline patrol pilots,” NAAA officials said.

The FAA’s Digital Obstacle File (DOF) provides information about potential obstacles in pilots’ flight path before they take off. Once pilots download the FAA’s Digital Obstacle File or Daily DOF, they can import it into Geographic Information Systems applications, such as agricultural aviation applications.

FAA Advisory Circular 70/7460-1L – on obstruction marking and lighting – details the ways different types of obstructions may be marked. The document provides specifications on lighting systems, colors and light intensities. As an alternative to lighting, the document also explains tools for the “unlighted marking” of obstructions. This includes paint colors and patterns, as well as specifications for guy wire sleeves and high-visibility spherical markers.

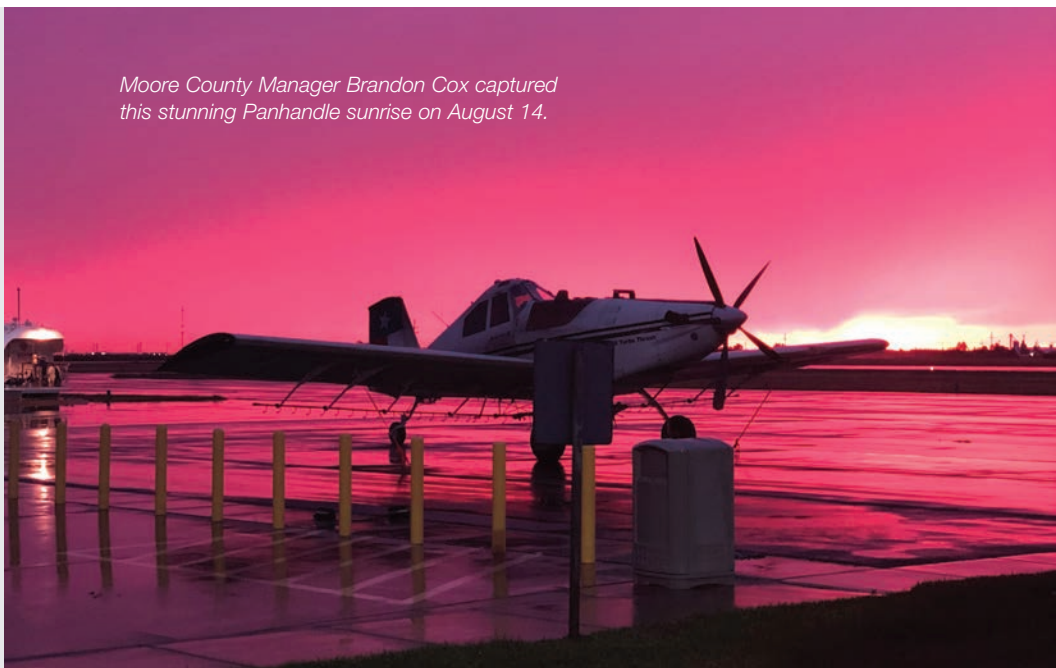
“Aerial applicators have been at the forefront of ensuring a safe airspace for low-flying pilots for years,” said NAAA Executive Director Andrew Moore. “We encourage farmers, landowners and tower companies to familiarize themselves with the dangers of unmarked, low-level towers. Towers in and around productive farmland may prevent a crop from being treated by air if it is too difficult or unsafe for an ag pilot to treat.”

Association officials note that since 2008 there have been 22 tower-related agricultural aircraft accidents resulting in nine fatalities. The number of accidents and fatalities is even higher when other low-level operations, such as EMS-Medevac operations, are included. ■

AIRPORT FEATURED PHOTO

If you have a photo that you would like featured in Wingtips, please submit your high resolution image to wingtips@tamu.edu. ■

Moore County Manager Brandon Cox captured this stunning Panhandle sunrise on August 14.



GRANTS RECEIVING TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION APPROVAL

Gainesville Municipal Airport

\$518,820

Rehabilitate and mark taxiway B; and remove excess pavement along taxiway B.

Madisonville Municipal Airport

\$918,900

Rehabilitate and mark rehabilitate and mark Runway 18-36, rehabilitate apron and cross taxiway; repair medium intensity runway lights, segmented circle and lighted wind cone; and install shoulder grading, new ditches and new culverts.

Lamesa Municipal Airport

\$1,968,810

Rehabilitate and mark Runway 16-34 and Runway 7-25; rehabilitate taxiway A, B, C, D, E, F, J, K & L; rehabilitate apron and hangar access taxiway M; and install precision approach path indicator-2.

Quanah Municipal Airport

\$686,170

Rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35 and taxiway A; rehabilitate apron; pavement strength evaluation and precision approach path indicator repair and service.

Wilbarger County Airport/Vernon

\$775,340

Rehabilitate and mark Runway 16-34; rehabilitate parallel taxiway to Runway 2-20; and hangar access taxiways; rehabilitate and repair apron; and mark apron and taxiways.

Brooks County Airport/Falfurrias

\$675,000

Replace runway 17-35 medium intensity runway lights with LEDS and airfield sign and replace PAPIs.

McGregor Executive Airport

\$617,910

Overlay and mark public apron area.

Rusk County Airport/Henderson

\$1,365,337

Rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35 and seal shoulders; construct new hangar access taxiway; rehabilitate parallel and cross taxiways, HMA hangar taxiways, PCC hangar apron, terminal apron and south PCC hangar apron.

Athens Municipal Airport

\$1,456,940

Reconstruct north parallel taxiway and cross taxiway and reconstruct apron.

Devine Municipal Airport

\$401,980

Rehabilitate and mark Runway 17-35; rehabilitate terminal apron; rehabilitate and mark taxiway leading to terminal apron; and rehabilitate airport access road.



Texas Department of Transportation

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AVIATION DIVISION

WINGTIPS

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