

# WINGTIPS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION  
OF THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION  
AVIATION DIVISION

SPECIAL CONFERENCE EDITION



**2023 TEXAS AVIATION  
CONFERENCE LIFTS  
OFF IN GALVESTON**

*p. 3*



SUMMER 2023



*AVN Division Director Dan Harmon delivers the State of the Aviation Division address during the Opening Session.*

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# 2023 TEXAS AVIATION CONFERENCE LIFTS OFF IN GALVESTON

By Chris Sasser

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

A near record crowd of 548 attendees were treated to a stellar lineup of speakers and sessions at the 41st Texas Aviation Conference at Moody Gardens in Galveston, Texas. The event was hosted by the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Aviation Division, and participants included aviation professionals, exhibitors, and enthusiasts.

This year's conference was highlighted by a question-and-answer session from U.S. Representative Sam Graves, who serves as the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. The Committee has jurisdiction over all modes of transportation – the aviation system, highways and bridges, transit and rail transportation, pipelines, and maritime and waterborne transportation.

The conference began with the traditional presentation of colors by the Galveston Fire Department, followed by the National Anthem, which was sung by Amy Larison.

Then Brian Maxwell, Galveston City Manager, welcomed attendees to Galveston followed by remarks from TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams.

"This is fantastic to see this great crowd and level of participation," said Williams. "This is one of the best conferences TxDOT puts on year in and year out. It's really because of the passion, enthusiasm, and collaboration that the participants bring."

TxDOT Director Dan Harmon then gave his annual state of the Aviation Division Address.

Harmon began his comments by inviting everyone to visit their new headquarters facility located at 6230 E. Stassney Lane. The Aviation Division moved into the new facility in the past year after residing in the Riverside Office Campus for over 20 years. Harmon then introduced new staff members who joined the division in the past year.

Harmon then spoke about the new Texas Airport System Plan.

"We recently kicked off the Texas Airport System Plan update project," said Harmon. "We're taking a bit of a different approach this time around in that this will be a living document that we can continuously update and use as the basis for statewide airport development. Not only will it help populate our new databases coming online for airport access management and project development, but we'll also look at new technologies. The result will be a better process for project identification selection."

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*Pete Huff (center) accepts an award for outstanding dedication to general aviation in Texas. Huff was a long standing member of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee.*

Then Harmon announced a new hangar rehabilitation project at their Flight Services facility located at Bergstrom Airport. Harmon noted that the facility offers flight services for state officials and maintenance for state agency aircraft. The project, when completed, will double its maintenance capacity and footprint.

Harmon then discussed the TxDOT Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) program, which is designed to be flexible while ensuring that all UAS activities conducted on behalf of TxDOT are done in the safest manner possible in compliance with all statutory requirements.

Following Harmon's remarks was "A Conversation with Chairman Graves." TxDOT Executive Director Williams moderated the session. Graves began the session by explaining the role of the House T&I Committee.

"We are the largest committee in Congress with 65 members," said Graves. "We have jurisdiction over all modes of transportation including waterways, shipping, ports, aviation, highways, bridges; anything or any way it can move, we have jurisdiction. In addition to that, we have jurisdiction over all public buildings in the United States, such as a Federal Courthouse or the Smithsonian, and the U.S. Coast Guard. It's a big committee with a lot of jurisdictions and a lot of history in Congress."

Williams also noted that Graves is co-chair of the House General Aviation Caucus. The purpose of a congressional caucus is to inform Members of Congress and their staffs about the importance of general aviation to the economy and transportation system.

The conversation then shifted to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization.

"I'm looking forward to passing a bipartisan FAA reauthorization this year that will include the first ever general aviation title," said Graves. "So many who pursue a career in aviation start out as a GA pilot, starting out at their local airfield. But there are challenges to that, such as expense, and we have to make sure that we figure out how to break down barriers to get young people involved and excited in aviation again. It's incumbent upon us in general aviation to do everything we can to encourage young people to choose a career in aviation, and that's something we need to be thinking about in terms of this reauthorization bill."

After a break, NASAO President & CEO Greg Pecoraro participated in a roundtable discussion with Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Chairman Shelly deZevallos. Pecoraro provided an overview of recent NASAO activities.

Keynote speaker Texas State Demographer Dr. Lloyd Potter completed the morning session. The Texas Demographic

Center functions as a focal point for the production, interpretation, and distribution of demographic information for Texas. In his presentation, Dr. Potter explained the recent population trends in Texas and what it means for our future.

After lunch, AVN Director of Planning and Programming Jim Halley moderated a Texas Airport System Plan Update. Then the conference began the afternoon breakout sessions.

“This year, we had so many session topics that we wanted to offer to our participants, that we elected to have four concurrent breakout sessions versus three,” said Halley.

Among the topics covered were aviation education, airport construction, non-primary entitlement program, emerging technologies, and the popular RAMP session. Fernando Hernandez recently became the RAMP Coordinator.

The day concluded with the annual banquet, which featured the TxDOT Awards Program winners.

The final morning of the conference featured three morning sessions.

The Airport Compliance session was moderated by Jim Halley, and then the popular Aviation Section Directors Townhall featured a townhall-style session with the Aviation section directors.

The conference concluded with an FAA Update and Q and A. This session provided participants the opportunity to ask questions to FAA officials and provide feedback on important issues.

“Every year we work hard to provide a wide range of relevant session topics for our participants,” said Harmon. “I was very pleased with our high attendance this year and we will review our evaluations carefully to improve our conference even more next year.”

*Texas State Demographer Lloyd Potter (right) is introduced by Aviation Division Director of Flight Services Raul Rios. Potter delivered the keynote address.*





# AIRPORT OF THE YEAR

## TRADEWIND AIRPORT

For more than a half-century, Tradewind Airport has gone above and beyond to deliver unparalleled service in the sky and on the ground.

Established in 1946 by Shelby Kritser, our airport has been a hub for general aviation in its community, located just three and a half miles from the central business district.

Tradewind is one of the higher altitude airports in the Lone Star state, covering an area of 595 acres at an elevation of 3,649 feet above sea level. It has two asphalt runways and one helipad.

Tradewind provides a full offering of aircraft management, consulting and air charter services including:

- aircraft storage
- maintenance
- crew staffing

- flight planning & scheduling
- detailed accounting
- concierge services, and
- aircraft brokerage and sales

Visitors to the airport are quick to note the airport's stellar service. One of the reviews read: "This airport is superior, has personal service, a great terminal and second to-none restaurant in Shelby's Diner."

Improvements to facilities and service have been amazing in the last year. Ground personnel are helpful and go above and beyond to service both locally based and transient customers. With improvements to parking, the FBO and the addition of a long-needed restaurant, Tradewinds has become a transformed and engaged factor in the local community. ■

*Tradewind Airport Manager Jon Kuehler accepts the Airport of the Year award from AVN Division Director Dan Harmon and Chairman of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Dr. Shelly deZevallos.*





Representatives from Granbury Regional Airport are awarded the Most Improved Airport Award by Chairman of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Dr. Shelly deZevallos (right) and AVN Division Director Dan Harmon (left).

## MOST IMPROVED AIRPORT

### GRANBURY REGIONAL AIRPORT

Granbury Regional Airport, the most improved airport of the year, has been called the “Friendliest Little Airport in Texas.” But until November 2022, the number of guests to receive its hospitality was limited to those who could safely use a runway only thirty-six hundred feet long.

Prior to November, the airport had the shortest runway among similar airports around western Dallas-Fort Worth airspace. With the community’s continuing economic growth, largely fueled by tourism and supported by general aviation, the expansion of the Airport was necessary to keep pace with demands.

Major improvements were necessary, and it was going to require ingenuity, cooperation, and funding. Lengthening the existing runway was not an option. A longer runway was going to have to be a new runway. Taking the new runway project from concept to completion included hurdles such as land acquisition, transmission line relocation, an environmental assessment, updates of the airport layout plan, development of design packages, approach development, and three phases of construction. All required intricate and precise sequencing.

City staff realized a project of this magnitude required a Master Plan update. As a proactive measure, the City used local funds for the update, ensuring that the Master Plan was

in place when the new runway was completed. Key local elected leaders and community stakeholders were brought together by City leadership to explain the vision for the project and its positive impact on the region. Support gradually gained altitude and over the years, it continued to climb.

Still, the question of funding a project this size remained. The typical TxDOT Aviation project is funded ninety percent State and ten percent local. A project of this magnitude required significantly more local funding. With a long-term commitment from the community, City leadership began aggressively pursuing construction of a new runway knowing that ultimately the City would be responsible for approximately half of the \$32 million in total project costs.

Monumental plans at the Granbury Regional Airport have now become tangible improvements:

- A new 5,200 foot x 75 foot runway,
- Full-length parallel taxiway,
- New 8,000 square yard terminal apron,
- New LED runway edge lighting,
- New Precision Approach Path Indicators on both ends,
- New airfield electrical vault, and
- Conversion of the former runway into a taxiway. ▀





# 2023 AVIATION ART CONTEST

*AIR SPORTS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT*



# 2023 WINNERS

## Category I | Ages 6 - 9



**1st | Claire Liu, 8**  
Denton Creek Elementary School

## Category II | Ages 10 - 13



**1st | Shreya Basak, 13**  
Uplift North Hill Preparatory

## Category III | Ages 14 - 18



**1st | Nicholas Briones, 14**  
Kempner High School



**2nd | Aarya Doddapaneni, 8**  
The Hockaday School



**2nd | Diya Vemireddy, 13**  
Dewitt Perry Middle School



**2nd | Aarush Gotur, 14**  
Coppell High School



**3rd | Prana V. Vemireddy, 6**  
McCoy elementary School



**3rd | Cecilia Chen, 13**  
The Hockaday School



**3rd | Isabella Teddy, 14**  
Kempner High School

**Claire Pranivong, 11**  
Lakeside Elementary School  
**Category II**  
**Honorable Mention**



**Iris Doan, 15**  
Kempner High School  
**Category III**  
**Honorable Mention**



# 2024 AVIATION ART CONTEST

The theme for the 2024 International Aviation Art Contest is "Air Sports for a Peaceful World." The contest offers school-aged children the opportunity to become involved in aviation through art and encourages youth, ages 6-17, from all over the world to reflect on aviation by having them create artwork on this year's theme.

Teachers and students interested in participating in the 2024 Aviation Art Contest can visit [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) and search "Art Contest" for further information and rules for format, medium and entry information.



*Cleburne Regional Airport Manager Garrett Watson (center) accepts the Project of the Year Award in the National Regional Airport Category by Chairman of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Dr. Shelly deZevallos (right) and AVN Division Director Dan Harmon (left).*

# NATIONAL/REGIONAL AIRPORT PROJECT OF THE YEAR

## CLEBURNE REGIONAL AIRPORT

On time and under budget. Words that every airport manager wants to hear.

Cleburne Regional Airport was behind the eight ball early on with their project due to the COVID shutdown and funding availability that necessitated an escalated timeline. But behind every successful project is a dedicated and motivated team, and this team worked hard to ensure the project was successful.

After conducting extensive analysis on the runway and taxiways, the project team found that the pavements exhibited significant widespread longitudinal and transverse linear cracking, minor surface raveling, and evidence of pavement pumping with areas of pavement failure and alligator cracking along aircraft wheel paths.

The team also observed transverse grades on the runway that were less than FAA minimums and a safety concern related to direct access from an apron to the runway.

Scoping alternatives were evaluated, with consideration given to benefit and cost. Ultimately, rehabilitation of Runway 15-33, the airport's lone runway, included 5,700 feet of full-depth

reclamation of the runway and a crack seal and emulsion treatment on the remaining runway surface.

This project also included full-depth reclamation of parallel Taxiway A and Taxiway D, infield grading, and installation of new medium-intensity taxiway edge lights. The original project scope anticipated relocation of Taxiway D to the north of the existing location; however, the consultant determined moving the taxiway would reduce exit capability for aircraft on Taxiway D.

One final aspect of this project that was unique was temporary use of the parallel taxiway as a runway. As a single runway airport, complete inability to serve local traffic was a concern during the Phase 1 closure for runway reconstruction. This was especially critical for accommodating pilot training.

The final contract amount of \$5.12M was approximately 18% under the final projected budget and was a great example of "Building Community" through an inventive and relevant project that involved substantial collaboration amongst the City of Cleburne, TxDOT Aviation, the Engineer and the Contractor. ■



# LOCAL/BASIC AIRPORT PROJECT OF THE YEAR

## HUNTSVILLE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

At airports, safety is paramount. It's a guiding principle on how projects are selected, designed, and built. Huntsville Municipal Airport recently began a major project with the goal of improving safety while conforming to FAA standards.

Huntsville Municipal Airport is a single runway "Business Corporate" general aviation airport located in central east Texas with over 25,000 yearly operations. The 5,000-ft runway had been successfully supported by a parallel Taxiway Alpha and its four connectors for multiple decades. However, as safety requirements on the airfield evolved over time, the separation of the Taxiway and Runway became a concern, as FAA standards required the Taxiway to be relocated 100-ft further from the Runway than it had originally been constructed.

The construction project was split into three phases to minimize its impact on the airport tenants. The first 2 phases consisted of the relocation of the northern and southern thirds

of the Taxiway. The relocated runway threshold subphases for work inside the Runway Safety Area were built as part of a singular project.

The third phase, consisting of the relocation of the middle third of Taxiway Alpha, broke ground in November 2022 and is slated to be completed in late March 2023. In addition to the taxiway relocation, the third phase also features the relocation of the airport's Automated Weather Observation System.

The success of these projects would have been impossible without the continued support and coordination between the consultant, the airport, the City of Huntsville, the electric utility Entergy, TxDOT, NOAA, the NWS, and the FAA. Truly a team effort resulting in a successful, and more importantly, safer airport. ■

Representatives from Huntsville Municipal Airport accept the Project of the Year Award in the Local/Basic Regional Airport Category by Chairman of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Dr. Shelly deZevallos (right) and AVN Division Director Dan Harmon (left).



# AIRPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

## ROBERT VARGAS

Robert Vargas, the winner of this year's airport professional of the year award has made quite an impact on Andrews County Airport and the community since becoming airport manager in 2010.

For years, he served as the sole airport employee but now has a staff of two others to assist him in maintenance, operations, and customer service. As the exclusive provider of fuel and transient aircraft services at the airport, the airport now has a dedicated staff member to ensure their tenants' and visitors' first impression of the county – the airport – is a positive one.

Vargas leads many local initiatives that should be emulated by other airports, from undertaking local maintenance projects to deter wildlife and beautify the airport (using both RAMP and local-only funding mechanisms), to educating local decision-makers on the value of protecting and investing in the airport.

He recently stepped up to serve on the Texas Aviation System Plan's Project Advisory Committee, adding a valuable voice of our state's panhandle and rural airports to the development of our aviation system's strategic plan for the future. Additionally, he proactively works with the local community to increase awareness of and investment in the airport.

Vargas takes a very hands-on approach to the airport, from greeting customers and tenants to airfield maintenance and operations. He is an energetic, enthusiastic, and dedicated airport manager and champion of Texas' aviation system as a whole.

Robert has gone above and beyond both what is expected of any airport manager and what should be expected with the resources he has available to him. The results speak for themselves as Andrews County Airport is a sparkling clean, well-maintained facility. ■

*Andrews County Airport Manager Robert Vargas celebrates winning the Airport Professional of the Year award.*







Corpus Christi District RAMP Coordinator Omar Garcia (left) accepts the RAMP Coordinator of the Year award from AVN Division Director Dan Harmon.

## RAMP COORDINATOR OF THE YEAR

### OMAR GARCIA

The routine airport maintenance program, or RAMP, was established in 1996 as a grant program to support general maintenance and improvement projects in our airport system. RAMP is supported by all 25 TxDOT districts, and is available to nearly 300 airports statewide.

RAMP Coordinators are TxDOT district-designated employees who work with the Aviation Division to provide assistance to airports in their districts. TxDOT Districts perform many maintenance functions at our airports with considerable cost savings.

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

This year's RAMP coordinator of the year, Omar Garcia, has worked with Texas airports in the Corpus Christi district for a little over ten years as the official RAMP coordinator.

Despite having a heavy workload with 11 airports, our recipient has a reputation for always being responsive to requests from the airports in his district, who all participate in RAMP.

An airport sponsor describes Garcia as professional and prompt to respond to him when he calls regarding questions about the airport. He considers Garcia a valuable asset to TxDOT because of his work ethic.

Mike Geer, Aransas County Airport Manager, says the following: "It speaks a lot to his commitment to customer service that my phone calls are always answered immediately. Whether it's something as simple as scheduling our annual taxiway and runway herbicide applications or a more complex pavement repair question, Omar always takes the time to listen. Follow-through is the real added value he provides." ■



Steward Bailey (center) is presented with the Aviation Educator of the Year award. Bailey was joined by his family members and Chairman of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee Dr. Shelly deZevallos (2nd from right) and AVN Division Director Dan Harmon (far right).

## AVIATION EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

### STEWARD BAILEY

Making an impact. It's a phrase heard often but how often does one truly make a difference in a person's life? Steward Bailey, the winner of the Aviation Educator of the Year truly embodies the spirit of this award.

Bailey is a Career and Technical Education instructor at Elsie High School in Houston, TX. He's also a student pilot and a licensed Airframe and Powerplant mechanic. Over the last few years, he has built an aviation program at the high school using AOPA's High School curriculum.

Thanks to his efforts, the school has partnered with Tango Flight and his students are now building an RV-12. This is a multi-year project that provides students valuable life skills such as patience, the ability to troubleshoot a problem, and how to work with other peers. Assisting with this project are a dedicated group of volunteer mentors from AOPA who donate the gift of time to help with building the plane.

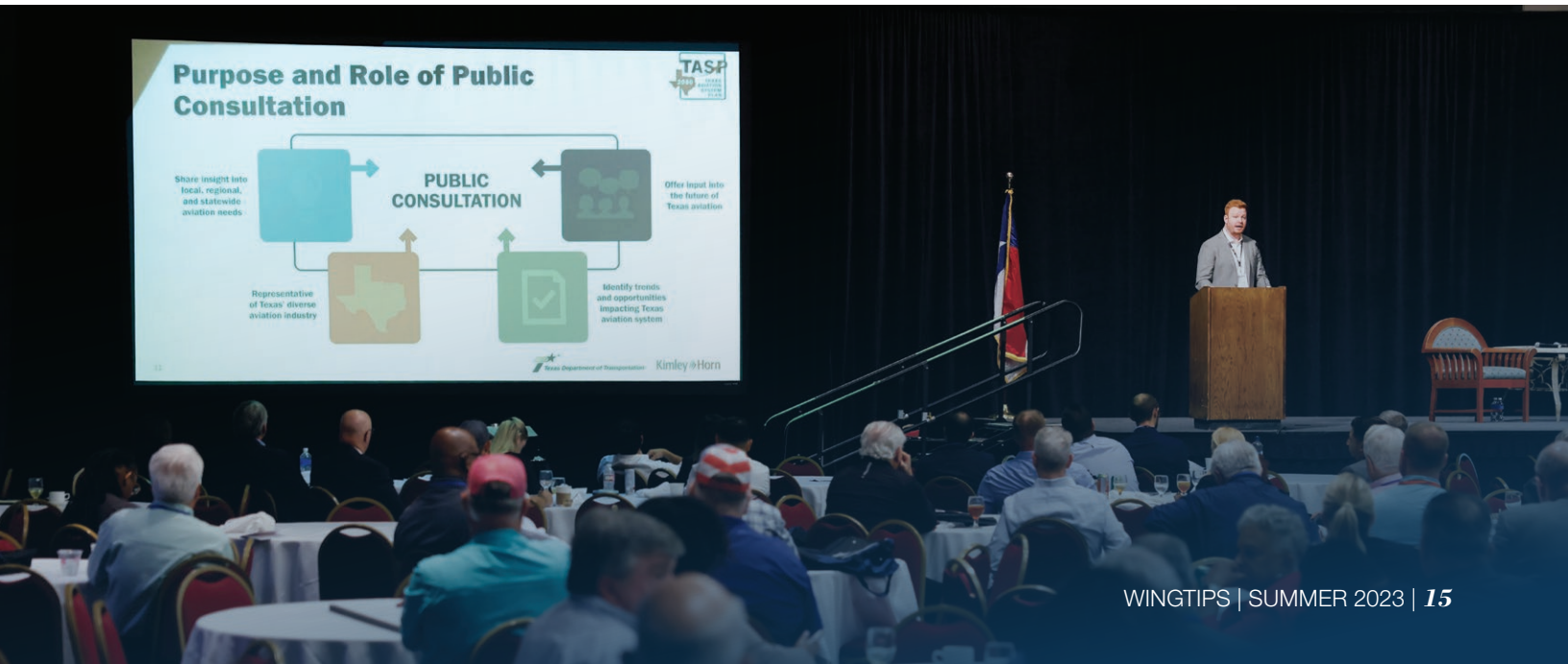
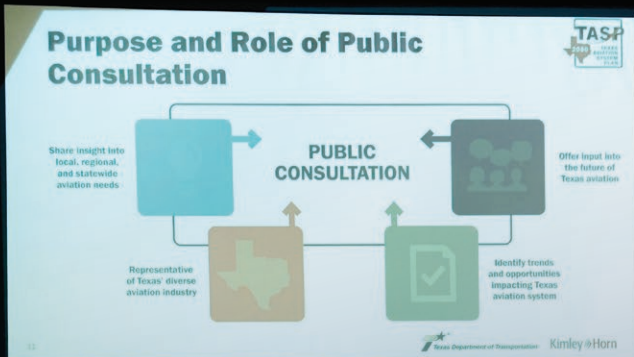
He is a tireless advocate for his kids and rewards them with airplane rides as they achieve their goals. AOPA Ambassador Pat Brown provides those rides in his Cessna 182. Several of his students have taken and passed either their Private Pilot Knowledge Test and are nearing their check rides or have achieved their unmanned aircraft systems certificate. One of them has also been accepted to the flight academy at a major airline.

Students thrive when given opportunities. And Bailey has given his students the opportunity to thrive and discover a passion for aviation. 🗨





# AROUND THE CONFERENCE





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**AVIATION DIVISION**

# WINGTIPS

*WINGTIPS* is an official publication of the Texas Department of Transportation Aviation Division. The intent of *WINGTIPS* is to keep the aviation community and others informed of local developments in aviation.

Printed circulation: 3,340

Also available online at <https://www.txdot.gov/business/aviation/forms-publications/wingtips-newsletter.html>.

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SUMMER 2023