TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 2025-2026 EDUCATIONAL SERIES

AVIATION

- Texas Airport System Plan, Goals, and Objectives
- General Aviation Airports and Heliports
- Aviation Funding
- Routine Airport Maintenance Program
- Aviation Capital Improvement Program
- TxDOT Flight Services
- Economic Impact
- Aviation Advisory Committee
- Texas Airport System Map
- Advanced Air Mobility

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT): Public website offering information and resources for drivers, businesses, government officials, and anyone interested in learning about TxDOT.

TxDOT 2025-2026 Educational Series: Focuses on key transportation issues affecting TxDOT and Texas.

Texas Department of Transportation

OVERVIEW

While commercial service airports are the most visible component of Texas' air transportation system, most aircraft activities occur at airports that serve only general aviation operations, which include all aircraft operations that are not scheduled commercial service or military flight. 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 flights.

To support the state's general aviation transportation demand, the Texas Legislature, through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), has invested more than $1.8 billion in federal and state funds over the past 30 years. These investments have helped improve and maintain the state's system of almost 266 eligible general aviation airports. TxDOT's responsibilities include providing planning, engineering, technical, and financial assistance to help Texas' local airport sponsors develop, construct, and maintain general aviation airports. In these responsibilities, TxDOT manages federal and state funds to provide financial assistance for local airport development in the form of grants for maintenance projects and larger capital improvement projects, which are scheduled in the Aviation Capital Improvement Program (ACIP), TxDOT's three-year planning document for general aviation projects across the state. TxDOT provides aviation education to local governments and works with communities to improve general aviation. Lastly, TxDOT maintains and operates the state-owned aircraft fleet to provide flight services to state officials and state employees traveling for state business and ensures all state agency-owned and operated aircraft remain in safe flying condition.

TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM PLAN, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The State of Texas has maintained a statewide airport system plan since 1970, when the now-defunct Texas Aeronautics Commission created the first Texas Aeronautical Facilities Plan. The state's aviation facilities plan – now known as the Texas Airport System Plan – was last comprehensively updated in 2010 and identifies public-use airports and heliports in Texas that perform essential economic and social development roles in their communities. While approximately 2,000 public and private landing sites are located throughout Texas, the Texas Airport System Plan includes nearly 300 public-use airports that are eligible for state or federal funds. Although TxDOT is responsible for maintaining and updating the Texas Airport System Plan, TxDOT typically works with publicly-owned, public-use general aviation airports in the plan – as most private airports are not eligible for state or federal funding and commercial service airports work directly with the Federal Aviation Administration to access federal funding.

The 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 the following airport goals:

- 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.

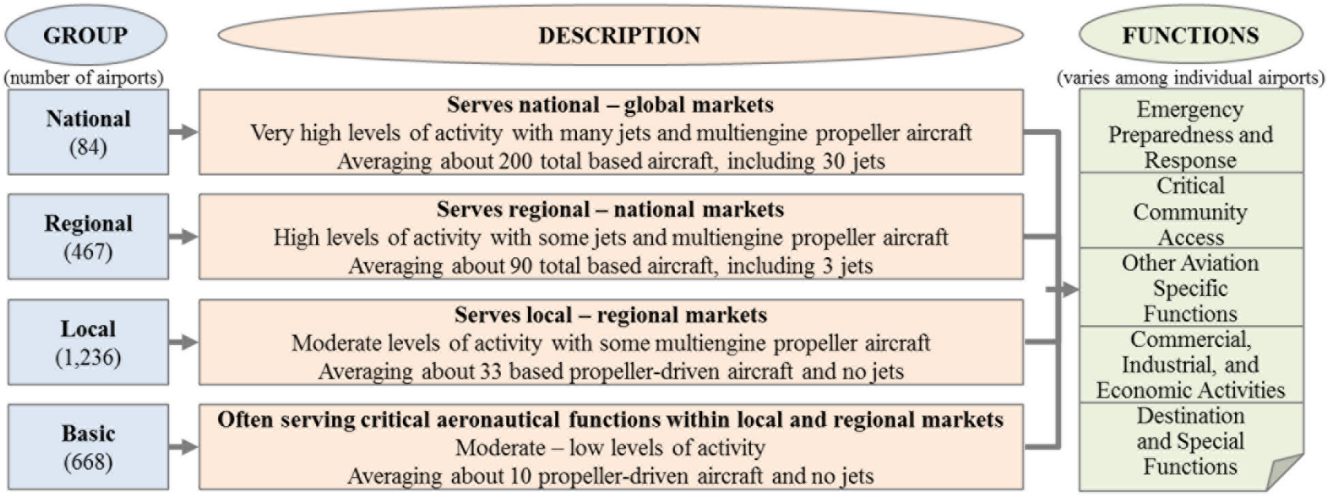
Additionally, the Texas Airport System Plan is designed to provide adequate and, when necessary, new airport capacity to meet forecasted demand while adhering to federal and state-mandated planning and design standards. The planning process identifies capital improvement opportunities and provides guidance 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 Summer 2025. 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.

in the national airport system and eligible for federal funds. 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. These categories are national, regional, local, and basic assets. Texas' general aviation airports that are not included in the

Figure 2: General Aviation Airport Categories



GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS AND HELIPORTS

General aviation airports represent most of the airports included in the Texas Airport System Plan and 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, the Federal Aviation Administration's inventory of commercial service and general aviation airports included

Federal Aviation Administration's national airport system fall in the Federal Aviation Administration's local or basic categories.

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, helicopter taxis, and medical

Texas Airport System Plan
https://www.txdot.gov/projects/planning/aviation-capital-improvement/airport-system-plan.html

Report: General Aviation Airports: A National Asset
https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/airports/planning_capacity/ga_study/2012AssetReport.pdf

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 Heliport, and DeSoto Heliport.

AVIATION FUNDING

TxDOT and local airport sponsors – generally county or city governments that own a general aviation airport – 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 $58 million in federal funding – including $19 million in federal apportionment, $24 million in non-primary entitlement, and $15 million in discretionary funding. Before the 88th Legislative Session (2023), TxDOT had historically received $20 million annually in state funding directed to the Texas Aviation Facilities Development Program. The 88th Legislature increased this state funding to $67 million annually for the 2024-2025 biennium. This state appropriation goes toward two TxDOT general aviation programs – the Aviation Capital Improvement Program, a three-year schedule of general aviation capital projects across the state, and the non-statutory Routine Airport Maintenance Program, which assists with smaller airport maintenance projects. Texas is one of ten states that participates in the Federal Aviation Administration's State Block Grant Program, whereby TxDOT administers federal Airport Improvement Program grants specifically for general aviation airports on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration. Because Texas participates in this federal program, 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 COVID-19 relief funds allocated in 2020 and 2021 as well as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding for Texas general aviation. Much of the state funding that TxDOT receives through the Texas Legislature's biennial budget process is used for projects at general aviation airports that are not eligible for federal funding. State funding also sustains the Routine Airport Maintenance

Program (RAMP), described in the following section. More visible commercial service airports, such Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and George Bush Intercontinental Airport, access federal funding programs directly through the Federal Aviation Administration instead of working through TxDOT as general aviation airports do.

ROUTINE AIRPORT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The Routine Airport Maintenance Program, first created by TxDOT in 1996, helps airports fund eligible maintenance activities to preserve investments in airport infrastructure. Using state legislatively appropriated Texas Aviation Facilities Development Program funds, TxDOT provides Routine Airport Maintenance Program grants to help facilitate maintenance and improvements for lower-cost airside and landside needs. These grants may be used for runway and taxiway pavement and lighting, security fencing, automated weather observing systems, and fueling systems. For an eligible project, TxDOT will reimburse up to $100,000 per airport for each fiscal year. The cost share for the local sponsor, i.e. the local government that owns the airport, is 10 percent of the project's actual cost plus any amount exceeding $100,000 in total costs. TxDOT determines the eligibility of specific items and places priority on maintaining the airside – the portion of the airport where aircraft movements take place – over improvements on an airport's landside, which includes parking lots, terminal buildings, and roads used by passenger vehicles. Local governments can issue

Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP)

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

contracts for the work, or, in some instances, the local TxDOT District can perform the services. Each TxDOT District assigns a Routine Airport Maintenance Program coordinator, who is responsible for providing Routine Airport Maintenance Program assistance and guidance to airports in their TxDOT District.

AVIATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Aviation Capital Improvement Program is a three-year plan for general aviation airport projects in Texas. It is a detailed listing of potential projects based on the anticipated funding levels of the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Improvement Program, the state-funded Texas Aviation Facilities Development Program (AFDP), local matching funds from airport sponsors, and various other funding programs such as Federal Supplemental and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as applicable. Through multi-year programming, the Federal Aviation Administration, TxDOT, and airport sponsors are better able to anticipate airport needs and accommodate changes in project scope, cost, and schedule. Generally, the Aviation Capital Improvement Program is updated by TxDOT and adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission each year. Because the State of Texas participates in the Federal Aviation Administration's State Block Grant Program, TxDOT assumes responsibility, on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration for the yearly preparation of the Airport Capital Improvement Program for general aviation airports. TxDOT regularly receives input from airport sponsors, works directly with them to identify airport needs, and ensures projects are adequately prepared before they can be programmed and scheduled into the Aviation Capital Improvement Program. As required by state law, 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.

After projects are included in the program and plans are sufficiently developed, the Texas Transportation Commission reviews and approves federal and state grants for eligible projects based on the schedule in the Aviation Capital Improvement Program. To share costs and ensure local communities have a vested interest in these projects, Section 21.105, Texas Transportation Code, requires at least 10 percent of a project's total cost be funded with non-state sources – generally the airport sponsor's "local match" – before the grant can be finalized. This requirement in state law also applies to any legislative budget rider-funded projects that are included in TxDOT's bill pattern in the Texas General Appropriations Act.

Aviation Capital Improvement Program

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

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.

TxDOT Flight Services

https://www.txdot.gov/government/programs/sharing.html

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, managed by TxDOT's Aviation Division, aims to fully integrate Unmanned Aircraft Systems, commonly known as drones, into TxDOT's critical operations to increase cost savings and efficiency by equipping TxDOT districts and divisions with Unmanned Aircraft Systems as a tool for data collection, project development, and emergency operations. The program, established in partnership with Austin Community College, provides 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 Unmanned Aircraft Systems pilots oversee operations in the field. These operations include bridge and tower inspections, right of way and pavement surveys, and incident management. The inaugural cohort of TxDOT Unmanned Aircraft Systems 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. 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 distances between population centers in Texas 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 in 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. 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.

AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Aviation Advisory Committee provides input to TxDOT and the Texas Transportation 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 are appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission to serve three-year terms. State law requires a majority of the members of the committee to have five years of successful experience as an aircraft pilot, an aircraft facilities manager, or a fixed-base operator. The committee is required to periodically review the adopted Aviation Capital Improvement Program and advise the Commission on its preparation and yearly adoption.

AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY

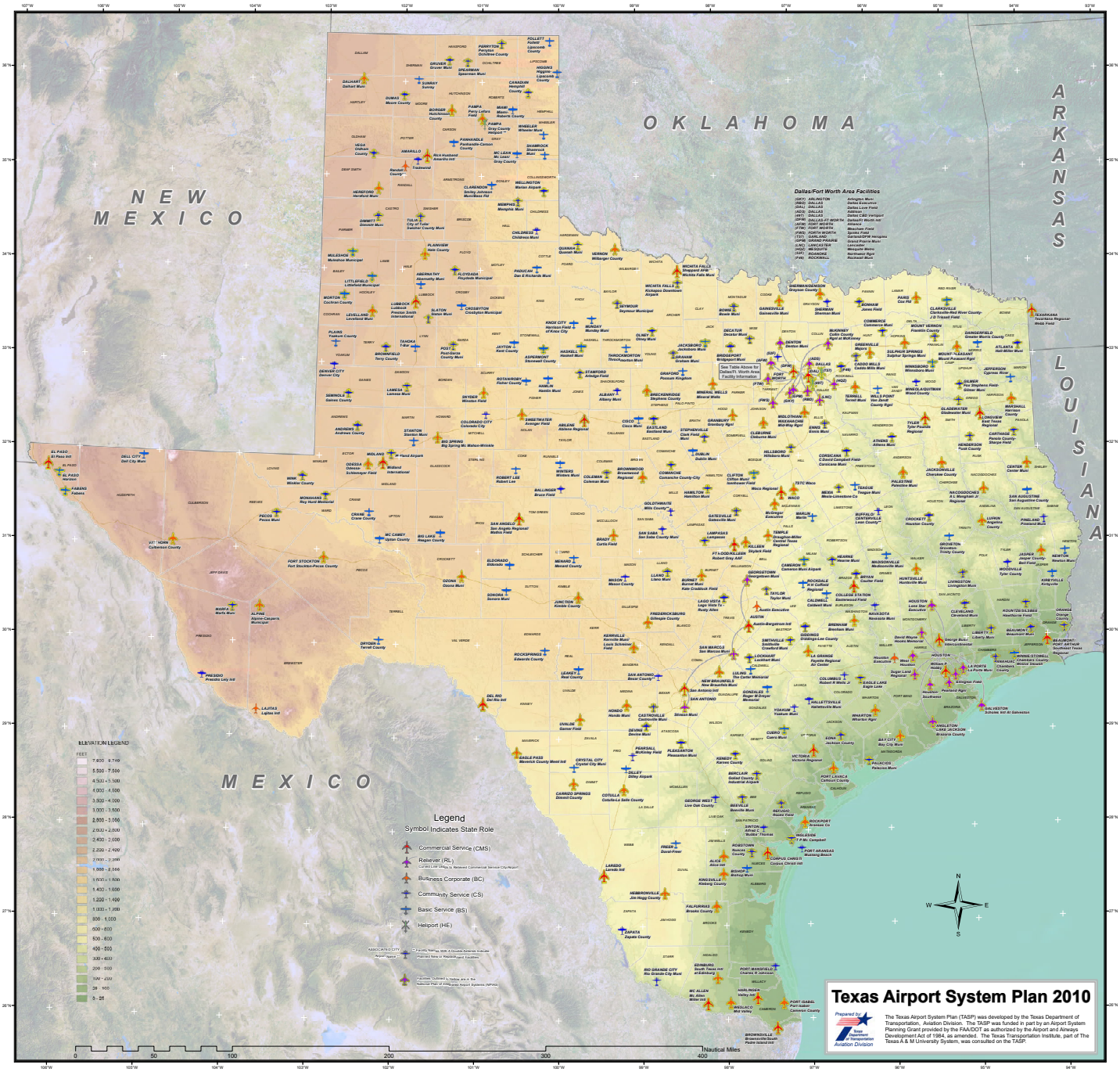
Advanced Air Mobility – defined by the Federal Aviation Administration as a transportation system that transports people and property by air using advanced aircraft technology – comprises a broad range of innovative aeronautical technologies, including vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft, electric aircraft, and transformative air traffic management systems. Urban Air Mobility, a subset of Advanced Air Mobility, envisions a future aviation transportation system that employs highly automated aircraft, such as drones, to transport passengers or cargo at low altitudes in urban and suburban areas. In anticipation of plans to continue testing and eventually implement this technology, industry stakeholders in Texas and across the country are working with public and private partners to study potential changes to state law to facilitate the Advanced Air Mobility industry's development, safety, and regulatory framework. During the 87th Legislative Session (2021), the Texas Legislature established the Urban Air Mobility Advisory Committee – whose membership was appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission – to evaluate the state's statutory and regulatory environment on this emerging technology. The Urban Air Mobility Advisory Committee developed various recommendations surrounding technology, airspace and infrastructure, and safety and security. After submitting its recommendations, the committee was statutorily abolished.

During the 88th Legislative Session (2023), the Legislature sought to build on the work of the Urban Air Mobility Advisory Committee by reestablishing the committee as the Advanced Air Mobility Advisory Committee. The committee, which which was statutorily abolished on January 1, 2025, largely mirrored the previous committee's composition and purpose. The Advanced Air Mobility Advisory Committee was required by law to produce a report before the 89th Legislative Session (2025) that includes recommendations on state law necessary to advance the deployment of advanced air mobility in Texas. With the help of a team of Texas State University staff and graduate students, TxDOT coordinated and carried out various aspects of the Advanced Air Mobility Advisory Committee, including facilitating meetings, gathering necessary information from external sources, and assisting in the report's development. Committee membership included those representing the state's diverse geographic regions, law enforcement, the urban air mobility and broad transportation industries, commercial airports and vertical takeoff and landing operator, local governments, and the public to gain a diversity of perspectives for the future deployment of this technology in Texas.

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY

www.txdot.gov/content/dam/docs/aviation/aama/aam-committee-final-report-2024.pdf

TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM MAP



TEXAS AIRPORT SYSTEM MAP

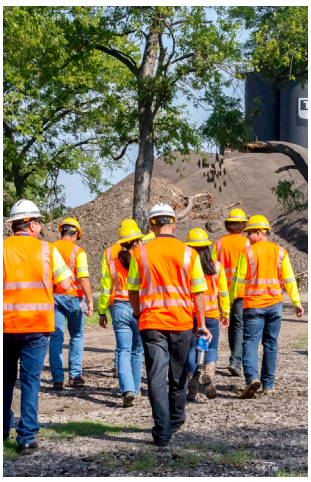
https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/avn/tasp_map_2010.pdf

MISSION

Connecting you with Texas.

VISION

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



VALUES

People

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

Accountability

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

Trust

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

Honesty

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

PRIORITIES

Safety

Design, build, operate, and maintain our transportation system with safety as our #1 priority.

Delivery

Responsible program execution throughout the transportation life cycle (planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operations).

Innovation

Forward-thinking, technology-focused, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Stewardship

Professional, responsible stewards of resources.