

**North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)  
Air Transportation Advisory Committee  
September 2, 2021**

The Air Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) convened at 1 pm on September 2, 2021, held as a Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Natalie Bettger welcomed members to the September 2, 2021, ATAC meeting.

**2. Orientation to Agenda, Natalie Bettger, NCTCOG**

Natalie noted that attendance would be recorded via Teams and asked those participants who called in, to identify themselves along with their phone number, so they could be accounted for. She also noted that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of drafting the meeting summary.

**3. Approval of June 3, 2021, ATAC Meeting Summary**

The summary of the June 3 ATAC meeting was not available at this time.

**4. Texas Legislative Funding Amendment Briefing, Tom Chandler, AOPA**

Tom provided a briefing on the status of the TxDOT Aviation budget in front of the Texas Legislature. Two riders had been plugged into the Aviation budget: a \$15 million project for runway extension at Odessa; and a \$5 million hangar project in the southern part of the State. With these unexpected additions, the challenge was that all the funds would come out of the TxDOT Aviation budget and it would affect a lot of airports across the state. Several groups joined together to lobby the Governor asking for a line-item veto on both riders but were unsuccessful and the budget was approved. However, Ector County refused the appropriation, which put the funds back to the Legislature. The Legislature can strike the rider language, or they can authorize TxDOT Aviation to reprogram the funds as part of a budget amendment. This could come about as early as this fall. The issue will be followed closely as it impacts some of the airports in the DFW region.

**5. Airport Spotlight: City of Fort Worth Aviation Update, Roger Venables, City of Fort Worth**

Roger Venables updated the committee on Capital Improvement Program (CIP) items at Meacham Airport. Two significant projects are underway. The first is the midfield redevelopment project. The land was undevelopable due to a cross runway. In 2015 the City adopted a resolution to close the runway. The benefit of the project was to eliminate the capital expense associated with cross runways and associated taxiways and provide for some increased economic viability for the airport. Phase 1 was completed in December 2019 at a cost of \$9.1 million. Utilities are currently under construction at a budget of \$3.8 million in Phase 2. Total cost of Phase 1 and Phase 2 is about \$13 million, of which about \$4.7 million is from the Aviation budget. Roger displayed an aerial map depicting the construction area and provided a more detailed description of the work being done.

The second CIP has to do with Main St. Frontage improvement project. The scope of this project is to close the existing bar ditch, install new curb and gutter, remove existing overhead power lines, and install conduits to accommodate electrical service, improve landscaping,

wayfinding and drainage. Aesthetics to the front of the airport will be brighter and improved. Cost of this project is estimated at \$8.8 million.

#### **6. TxDOT Aviation Update, Jim Halley, TxDOT Aviation**

Jim Halley, Director of Planning, provided an update on the TxDOT airport master planning and required coordination and timeline. Planning studies are a high priority right now. Various airports of different sizes require different needs and will have different elements, and different levels of detail. To meet the true needs of individual airports, there needs to be focus on the scope and development of different elements of master plans. Then, when it comes down to planning and programming the CIP, there is a comprehensive complete plan to help justify those projects.

Jim expressed the importance of a continuous collaborative effort between planners, airports, and TxDOT Aviation, so that when a draft CIP is presented there are no surprises and project implementation can move forward. Constant communication needs to happen between all parties with monthly TxDOT/sponsor check-ins, annual site visits by aviation planners, data updates, basically everything that is happening at an airport.

Jim went over the different stages of project development and discretionary funding. Discretionary funding is an FAA mechanism that is only available to airports under FAA's National Airport Integrated Systems Plan. TxDOT Aviation gets between \$10-\$14 million a year in discretionary funds.

TxDOT is continually asked to do more with less – more projects with less money. How they can deliver with increasing demand on the system with less resources is incredibly important. It is very important to update the Texas Airport System Plan so all are on the same page when it comes to implementation.

#### **7. NCTCOG Aviation Update, Ernest Huffman, Jeff Kloska, NCTCOG**

Jeff Kloska and Ernest Huffman presented updates on NCTCOG Aviation programming, the Airport Funding Dashboard, recent COVID related information, and any recent developments in the UAS realm.

##### Airport Funding Dashboard

Jeff led with an update on regional airport funding for the NCTCOG region. Through August 2021, \$18.7 million of federal funds was available to the NCTCOG region; \$876,000 in State funds; and \$876,296 in COVID relief funds from the government. There have been some sizable projects this year, including Denton, Granbury, Gainesville, and Corsicana. Funding for the NCTCOG region and the rest of the state was split almost evenly. To date, the State of Texas has had over \$39 million dispersed.

##### COVID-19 Effects on North Texas Aviation

Jeff next provided information on diagnosed COVID-19 cases, the vaccination status in the NCTCOG region and statewide, and the effect of the Delta variant on the aviation industry. He provided Traffic Flow Management System Counts and noted that the bottom fell out for the aviation industry in April 2020 as people stopped traveling. Air carriers responded quickly to lessen the fiscal impact. Air freight sustained well and was seeing strong growth. General Aviation also recovered quickly, and commercial operations has recovered to near pre-

pandemic levels. The TSA reports lower throughput counts and airlines are reporting lower booking rates going into the fall.

#### Arlington Entertainment District Advanced Air Mobility Pilot Program

Ernest presented on the progress of the pilot program. The program will establish a routine beyond visual line-of-sight drone operations with potential opportunities to graduate to more advanced applications in the future. The overall goal is to get the enabling infrastructure, enabling software, and enabling management structure and processes in place for more advanced drone related operations not only in the entertainment district but scaled out throughout Arlington, and hopefully, to eventually scale out throughout the Metroplex. Ernest listed the key teaming partners.

The application process can take several months. Ohio State University is working with the FAA Integration to streamline and accelerate the application process.

Ernest went over the pilot program schedule which began in May 2021, with a projected closeout date of September 2022.

#### UAS Safety and Integration Initiative

Ernest announced the first UAS Community Integration Working Group meeting was held on August 20. This group was created as part of a resolution the Regional Transportation Council passed in February 2021. This group is set aside specifically for city management and city staff to talk about UAS-related integration pains, programming, funding issues. Discussion topics included program development from a UAS integration perspective. The September 24 meeting will focus heavily on public safety's usage with drone technology. The October 29 meeting will focus on city operations and cities' use with drone technology, particular in use for inspections, infrastructure, and surveying.

### **7. Open Discussion**

Natalie announced the next meeting will be at 1 pm, on December 2 in a virtual environment. As there was no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

### **Meeting Participants**

#### **Voting Members in Attendance**

Attendance was not taken at the September 2, 2021, meeting.

#### **NCTCOG Staff in Attendance**

Natalie Bettger  
Ernest Huffman  
Jeff Kloska