

2016 GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Any and all airports are award-worthy as they provide the best mile of pavement that a community can own. Some airports, however, really go above and beyond to exceed expectations for having a safe and operational facility. Our winning airport embodies these characteristics and is well deserving of this award.

The airport was constructed in 1947 with two crossing runways and served as an emergency airfield for military training aircraft in the area. The airport gradually deteriorated over the years until there was a single short runway with numerous potholes, no runway lights, no fuel or other services, and was unattended. The City seriously considered closing the airport.

In 1988, the situation improved when the local Economic Development Committee persuaded the City, County and the current Airport Manager to enter into a lease agreement and airport management contract to improve the airport and provide services to the public, especially to hunters and ranchers. Improving the airport became a priority for the entire community.

The runway was repaired to the extent possible and trees and brush were cleared away from the runway edges. The abandoned Flight Service Station building was renovated and converted into an office and terminal and the runway lights were repaired. The operator also constructed a hangar, opened an aircraft maintenance shop, and began selling both Avgas and Jet-A fuel which was a first for the airport. Traffic improved steadily as pilots learned the airport was attended and services were available.

In 1996, using local resources, the runway was extended to 4,600' to accommodate jet traffic. Enough jets began using the airport to justify a TxDOT-Aviation grant for a \$2.9 million project to extend the runway to 5,005' and add additional apron space for aircraft parking.

Well before the energy boom, many jets were landing at the airport that were larger than the airport was designed to accommodate. In 2009, TxDOT-Aviation, noting this growth, approved a request for a 6,005' runway, parallel taxiway, and

additional apron for aircraft parking. This almost \$8 million project helped establish the Airport as the aviation hub for the region.

With the support of the City of Cotulla and La Salle County and the dedication of Airport Manager E.T. Page and his wife Kye, the airport has grown from a landing strip into the well-maintained fuel service airport it is today.

It is our pleasure to recognize COTULLA-LA SALLE COUNTY AIRPORT as the 2016 General Aviation Airport of the Year.