

2016 MOST IMPROVED AIRPORT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Most of the people in this room are well aware of the fact that airports are *not* created equal. This year's recipient of the Most Improved Airport Award is something of an anomaly. While it is understandably common for airports to rely on state and federal grants to fund their facility development, this airport instead opted to work with their local economic development corporation to come up with an \$850,000 to finance a new custom facility. This addition has given this airport the ability to accommodate international travelers — offering them the luxury of a simpler, less complicated customs process, not typical of general aviation airports.

This airport was among the first to install an automated weather observing systems (AWOS). With this added feature, pilots and patrons have access to accurate weather information, improving airport safety.

With the support of a grant from the Aviation Division, this airport made significant improvements in 2015. The runway and taxiways received an overlay increasing the airport's pavement strength to 30,000 pounds.

The airport's apron and hangar access taxiways were also repaired and rehabilitated; the terminal apron tie-down layout was revised and the existing drainage culverts were repaired and extended a safer distance outside of the runway safety area.

The city council approved the closure of an adjacent road and the existing utilities were relocated to make way for the airport's upcoming runway extension project to begin construction in the first quarter of 2016. The project will lengthen the runway by 1,005 feet; allowing the airport to accommodate larger aircraft.

In addition to physical improvements, this airport is taking measures to improve its finances and maximize available land for development. Utilizing grants from TxDOT Aviation Division, this airport undertook a Business Plan in 2015 that will become the blueprint for making this airport the destination of choice for general aviation and corporate business travelers in the region. Another TxDOT Aviation Division grant is in place that will include a terminal area development plan to

maximize development at the airport and address code requirements related to drainage and detention. These projects will heighten its economic capabilities and position the airport for even greater success in the years to come.

It is my privilege, to award the **2016 MOST IMPROVED AIRPORT** honor to the **Mid Valley Airport in Weslaco.**