

## 2017 MOST IMPROVED AIRPORT

The award for the “MOST IMPROVED GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT” for 2017 goes to an airport that has succeeded in turning a corner in its evolution.

Starting out life during World War II, the facility flourished as a military training base. When this airports military mission came to a close, its civilian role began and it has been serving the surrounding communities as a commercial and/or general aviation airport since 1946.

Over time, as the area became nationally recognized for its agricultural research and university, the airport expanded to include commercial air service in the 1950’s, an air traffic control tower and supported two flourishing FBO’s. The airport no longer supports commercial service and the tower was de-commissioned in the 1980’s, but the role of the airport in the community is still as robust and vibrant as ever and it has evolved to serve large business jets, turbo-prop aircraft, agricultural operations and GA traffic that continue to utilize this facility.

In 2011, the primary airport stakeholders recognized, as many airports in the state have, that a transition needed to be made from one generation’s leaders to the next. To memorialize this airports rich history, and to develop a road map for the future, work began on an airport master plan.

Since the completion of the airports master plan, and through their partnership with TxDOT Aviation, the airport has succeeded in completing two paving projects. In addition to paving, the most recent capital improvements project, completed in April, 2017, included replacing the entire electrical system at the airport including all airfield signage with LED fixtures, LED runway edge lights, installation of a new primary wind cone, installation of supplementary wind cones, mitigating penetrations to the protected surfaces identified in the ALP by lighting adjacent obstructions, removal of the electrical vault from the old terminal building to a new concrete precast vault, removal of existing drainage structures that fell within the safety area limits and installation of a new storm sewer system.

Using recycled materials salvaged from the existing, non-standard, odd-angled taxiways that were demolished during this project, the airport constructed a small perimeter road connecting the east and west ramps on either side of the primary runway which allowed fuel trucks to shuttle fuel to both sides of the airport without leaving airport property or crossing the airfields protected surfaces. Finally, the airport worked with TxDOT to restore the runway to its original 6,000-foot length. With the completion of the current project, all of the airports paved surfaces are rehabilitated, remarked and ready to serve the flying public for years to come.

The thoughtful guidance of current and recent airport board members as well as significant involvement by both City and County management has succeeded in not only providing a “road

map” for future generations to follow but through recent CIP projects brought the entire airfield up to the most current standards.

The winner of the 2017 Most Improved General Aviation Airport is Hale County Airport in Plainview, Texas. Please help me congratulate Plainview Mayor Wendell Dunlap; Hale County Judge Bill Coleman; Airport Manager Stacie Hardage; and Airport Board Members Bill Cross, John Tye, and Tim Hardage.