

State honors Denton Airport

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By Candace Carlisle / Staff Writer

Denton Airport was named Reliever Airport of the Year out of a field of 21 such airports in the state by TxDOT at the 28th annual Texas Aviation Conference this week.

The award was given in recognition of Denton Airport's business growth and facility expansions, said David Fulton, director of the Texas Department of Transportation's aviation division.

"Each year, we pick one that did something significant," Fulton said. "They [Denton Airport] have really grown their business, improved their facilities, lengthened their runway and added a new terminal building."

The numerous projects at the airport include a \$1.2 million extension and expansion of the southeast taxiway, a planned 1,000-foot extension to lengthen the runway to 7,000 feet and additional perimeter fencing to enhance security, officials said.

Denton Airport also had an additional seven gas wells drilled on its property, which will provide a projected \$8 million in revenue over the next five years for aviation capital projects.

While there were many reasons why Denton Airport earned the award, Fulton said, community support played a key role.

"If you don't have that support, it's impossible to make that progress," he said.

Airport manager Quentin Hix said that in the past six to seven years, there's been a lot of community focus on airport improvements, which has resulted in improved service to existing industry at the airport.

"This is a very prestigious and important award in the general aviation industry in Texas," Hix said. "It's basically recognition for an airport that has made significant advancements and improvement to service for the general aviation industry."

Since 2004, more than \$24 million has been spent on public infrastructure improvements, officials said, funded primarily by Federal Aviation Administration grants.

Private companies at the airport — including Jet Works Air Center, Business Air Center, U.S. Aviation Group, and Nebrig and Associates Inc. — also have given financial support to the airport's infrastructure, Hix said.

For Denton Airport to be a conduit for business in North Texas, it's worth the recent private and public investments, said Damon Ward, owner and president of Business Air and one of the owners of Jet Works.

Jet Works recently installed a multimillion-dollar hangar at the airport that will help the company continue to grow, he said.

“We fully expect for our growth to continue,” Ward said. “We’ve been here almost 10 years. ... We invested millions of dollars from a private standpoint, and now the airport is marketed all over the world.”

Denton companies rely on the airport for business travel and cargo delivery — giving the city another entrance for business development, said Linda Ratliff, Denton’s economic development director.

There’s a significant economic impact for Denton, with companies like U.S. Aviation Group expanding flight training to international students who reside and spend money in the city, she said.

“There’s a lot going on at the airport and has been in the last 10 years,” Ratliff said.

The city’s multimillion-dollar investment in airport projects has paid off, she said.

“It’s an investment that has been well worth it already, and there’s more to come,” Ratliff said, citing the runway expansion and the new security fence. “We’re going to take it to that next level ... and prepare it for bigger and better things.”

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