

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

USING RESULTS FROM THE TEXAS AVIATION IMPACT 2026

Texas Department of Transportation

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

A credible economic impact analysis is one of the powerful tools that a state can provide to airports in its State Airport System. Results from an economic impact study provide a quantifiable means to communicate the economic value of an airport to the communities it serves. For economic impact studies to be most beneficial, they should be transparent in their approach, and they should be conducted using proven and tested methodologies. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) partnered to provide a statewide economic impact analysis for commercial and general aviation airports in the Texas Airport System.

The results from an airport economic impact study are most often used to secure funding, to inform planning and investment decisions, and to improve community relations. When used effectively, an economic impact study can be a valuable management and advocacy tool. An economic impact study converts airport activity into measurable annual benefits such as jobs, payroll, and economic activity/output.

Impacts for the Texas Airport System and for individual airports in that system are documented in a Technical Report. A statewide Executive Summary was also produced along with a two-page Fact Sheet. Further, economic impacts are summarized in a specific airport-based Individual Airport Report. All publications for the study are available via this link _____.
For the discussion that follows on understanding and using the economic impact study, the Technical Report provides greater detail and background on study inputs, data sources, and the methodology used to produce statewide and airport specific economic impacts. This publication is designed to help individual airports in the Texas Airport System capitalize on study findings and to use results to communicate the economic benefits of their individual airport.

COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS 25

263 GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS



1.1M TOTAL JOBS

$76.2B TOTAL ANNUAL PAYROLL

$222.6B TOTAL ANNUAL OUTPUT

78,510 TOTAL JOBS

$6.8B TOTAL ANNUAL PAYROLL

$17.0B TOTAL ANNUAL OUTPUT

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXAS AVIATION ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

To support the effective use of results from the economic impact analysis, it is important to have a general understanding of how those results were generated.

CATEGORIES OF ECONOMIC IMPACT

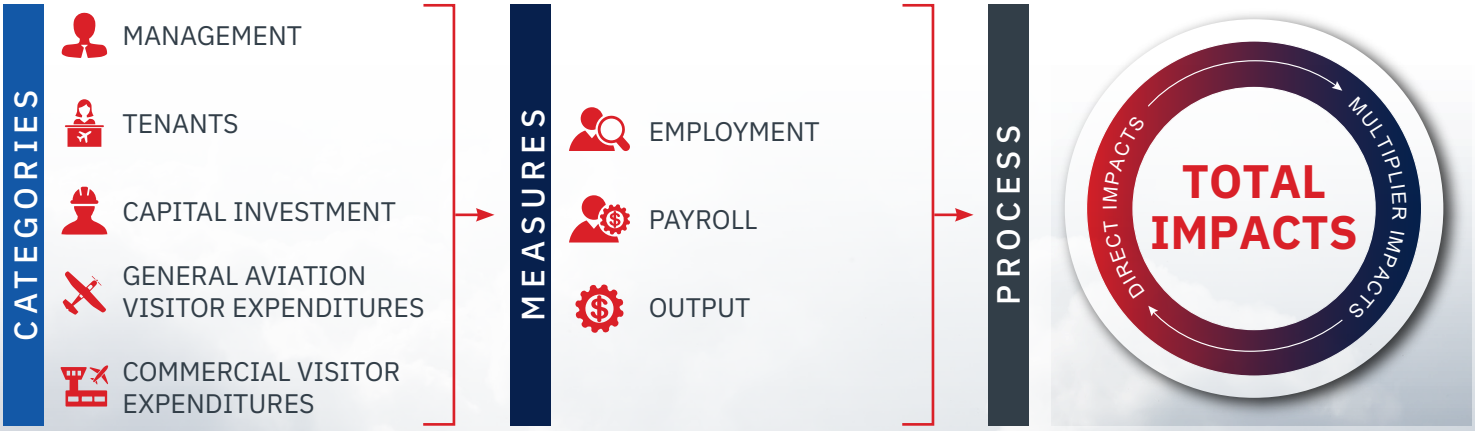
As applicable to each airport, economic impacts were estimated for five categories. Categories of economic impact, shown here, do not always apply to all airports. Some smaller general aviation airports may not have on-site aviation-related business tenants, and only the commercial service airports have impacts from commercial visitor expenditures. For the Texas study, impacts from capital investment were derived based on average annual spending from federal, state, local, and other sources over the past five years; the need for capital spending varies considerably among airports depending on the type and volume of activity the airport serves. Estimates of general aviation visitors and their associated spending were developed using airport and FBO input, FAA operational records, and study related surveys. Commercial visitor impacts were established using FAA passenger enplanement records and information from the USDOT that reports visitor as opposed to resident travelers.

MEASURES OF ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Texas Economic Impact Study used three measures to express statewide and airport specific annual economic impacts. These measures are employment/jobs, annual payroll associated with all employment, and output. Output represents the total flow of economic activity that moves from each airport into the state and local economies. Output is largely comprised of spending and sales.

PROCESS TO ESTIMATE ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The process to measure economic impacts, used in the Texas study, starts with identifying direct impacts for employment, payroll, and output. Direct impacts are the start of the economic impact cycle, and they can be measured, quantified, or counted in some way. Direct impacts are entered into an econometric input/output model to identify additional impacts that stem from the initial direct impacts. These additional impacts are classified as indirect and induced impacts and are referred to as multiplier impacts in the Texas study. For the Texas analysis, the IMPLAN model was used to estimate multiplier impacts. When combined, direct and multiplier impact equal total annual economic impacts reported in the study. More detail on the study approach and the modeling process can be found in the Technical Report.



TAPPING INTO STUDY RESULTS

There are various ways that airport specific economic impacts from the Texas study can be used locally to benefit each study airport. Opportunities for using economic impact estimates follow.

COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF THE AIRPORT

Many local officials, community leaders, and residents often do not fully understand the role the airport plays in the local economy. Results from the economic impact analysis show annual jobs and payroll the airport supports and estimates the total annual flow of economic activity from the airport, expressed as annual output. For many Texas airports, the economic impact study revealed that airport benefits extend beyond those associated with the economy. Surveys submitted by Texas airport managers show that airports support many benefits that cannot be assigned an economic value. Uses vary by airport, but when an airport is communicating its "value" (as applicable) the following activities it supports should be highlighted. When discussing the uses/users below, it is far more impactful if you are able to provide the names of users and the frequency of their use



BUSINESS SUPPORT

Airports have local businesses that rely on the airport; they own, rent, or charter aircraft. Many businesses also rely on scheduled commercial airline service. Many Texas airports also accommodate visiting businesses. Business activity supported by an airport strengthens its economic contribution



AGENCY USE

Local, state, and federal agencies use the airports to support their missions and duties. Airports support law enforcement, pipeline/powerline monitoring, wildlife management, public safety, environmental preservation, homeland security/border patrol, and forest fire control.



HEALTHCARE/EMERGENCY SERVICES

Air ambulance operators report serving hospitals across Texas and that they use more than 130 Texas airports for medical transport missions. Highlighting the important role that airports play to support healthcare and emergency services is vital when reporting airport contributions.



MILITARY OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Texas ranks first nationally for military flight training. While most of the flight training takes place at one of several military installations, many public airports are used to support military flight training.



AERIAL APPLICATIONS

Texas ranks 2nd nationally for its agricultural GDP. Many Texas airports support based and/or transient aerial applications that treat crops, ranch lands, and timber resources. There is often a critical link between the agricultural and timber industries and activities supported by Texas airports.



CARGO/FREIGHT DELIVERIES

Airports support important just-in-time deliveries that are vital to hospitals and business throughout Texas. Many logistics jobs are located off-airport; nevertheless, the role that airports play in supporting air cargo, freight, and just-in-time deliveries should be recognized.



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Texas ranks number one nationally for the economic contribution of its hunting and fishing activities. Many airports bring visitors to Texas to engage in recreational activities; spending by these air visitors is reflected in study reported economic impacts.

When communicating the benefits of the airport, consider presentations to all key decision makers including city councils, county boards, chambers of commerce, voters, and economic development organizations.

TAPPING INTO STUDY RESULTS

SECURING FUNDING FOR AIRPORT PROJECTS

When seeking funds from the FAA or TxDOT, airports are often called upon to justify the benefit of the grant request. When federal and/or state funding assistance is requested, a local funding contribution or match is most often a prerequisite. Airport specific economic impact results can be used to help secure federal/state grants and to justify local funding that is needed to secure those grants. Economic impact studies can be important for gaining support for future airport expansion. Some airports sell bonds to finance capital development projects. Results from the economic impact can be used to demonstrate the economic viability of the airport, thereby helping to demonstrate the soundness of investment in the bonds.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Economic developers often use airport economic impact data when recruiting businesses. Information from an economic impact analysis helps to demonstrate the airport's importance to its market area. Study results can be used to identify the importance of the airport as a point of air access, highlighting role the airport plays in supporting local and visiting businesses and regional commerce. Companies considering relocation or expansion often view airport access as a major competitive advantage. Economic development organizations often use airport impact studies when recruiting manufacturers, distribution centers, and corporate offices. An economically healthy airport can be a critical locational factor for some businesses and industries.

Showing economic viability of the airport also can be used as a tool to attract aviation related development to the airport. Corporate flight departments, aircraft maintenance providers, FBOs, cargo operators, and aircraft manufacturers typically seek airports that are high economic generators and contributors to their area's economy.

JUSTIFYING AIRPORT INVESTMENT/FUNDING

If local governments are considering reducing airport funding, the results from the economic impact analysis provide objective evidence of the airport's benefit to the local funding agency and the community. The annual local funding contribution to the airport's operating budget can be compared to the total annual output (derived from the economic impact analysis) that the airport supports. Airports can also compare public investment in the airport to the annual employment and payroll the airport supports. By comparing funding needs to total annual estimated output, economic impact findings can provide an estimated return on investment (ROI). This helps show taxpayers and policymakers the value received from supporting the airport's operations.

Economic impact results can also be beneficial for justifying the need for major infrastructure improvements to airfield and/or landside facilities. Decision-makers are more likely to support projects when they understand the economic return realized from the airport. Economic impact estimates can also be used to help "defend" the airport. Results can be used to protect the airport from incompatible land use/development; findings can be used to help demonstrate the importance of preserving airport property.

LEVERAGING ADVOCACY – LEGISLATIVE AND BUSINESS

Elected officials and others who make decisions that impact the airport may not have a complete understanding of the airport's economic value and its other important contributions. Results from the economic impact study can provide a foundation for meetings with state legislators, members of Congress, and various transportation officials. Results from the economic impact study provide clear economic metrics (jobs, payroll, and output). Results from the economic impact study can be used to engage key businesses in the airport's market area and may provide an opportunity to establish a business advisory group that can champion the airport and its needs.

BENCHMARKING ECONOMIC CHANGES

Economic impact studies create benchmarks. TxDOT and TTI have conducted similar studies in the past and most likely will conduct similar studies in the future. Changing conditions can result in lower economic impacts between reporting periods, but most airports experience increased economic impacts that are not solely driven by inflation. Comparing results provides excellent metrics to show how the airport is supporting more jobs, increased payroll, more visiting spending, and higher annual output. Increases in annual economic impact help to demonstrate the value of past airport investment.

SUMMARY

Economic impact assessments are much more than a report. When used correctly, they can be a strategic tool for funding, planning, marketing, public relations, economic development, and political advocacy. The most successful airports continuously use their results in presentations, grant applications, board meetings, and conversations with community leaders. For meetings and presentations related to your airport's economic impact, effective communication can be enhanced through the distribution of the Statewide Executive Summary, the Study Fact Sheet, and/or the airport's Individual Summary Report.