
Sponsored by:

The Texas Department of Transportation

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

March 31, April 1, 2, & 3 2026

Embassy Suites by Hilton Dallas-Frisco Hotel & Convention Center

7600 John Q Hammons Drive

Frisco, TX 75034



Special Activities

A Get Acquainted Networking Reception is planned for Monday from 5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Special Needs

In compliance with ADA requirements, participants with special needs can be reasonably accommodated by contacting EM&P at 979-862-1219 or toll free at 888-550-5577, at least 5 working days prior to the conference.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Aviation Division at 1-800-68-PILOT.

2026 Texas Aviation Conference Program
Embassy Suites, Frisco TX
March 31 – April 3, 2026

TUESDAY MARCH 31, 2026

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Exhibitor Setup (Frisco 6)

2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Registration/Check-In

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. TxDOT RAMP Coordinators Site Visit

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Adopt an Airport Program Overview
New Participant Orientation (Bass-Bush-Erudia Schools)
Becky Vick, TxDOT Aviation Division

If you are attending for the first time, traveling solo, or want the chance to meet other attendees before the Get-Acquainted Reception begins, we urge you to attend the New Participant Orientation. Attending a conference for the first time can be a bit overwhelming. This orientation will provide an opportunity for attendees to meet friendly faces before the conference begins. It is also an opportunity to learn more about the Adopt an Airport program. This is an informal event on Tuesday afternoon, before the opening reception in the exhibit hall.

5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Exhibits Open (Frisco 6)

5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Get Acquainted Networking Reception (Frisco 6)

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Dinner and Networking (on your own)

WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2026

7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast in Exhibit Hall (Frisco 6)

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Opening Session (Frisco 1-5)

Presentation of Colors
Frisco Fire Department

National Anthem
Sabrina Frost

Welcoming Comments

Introduction of Aviation Advisory Committee
Dan Harmon, Director, TxDOT Aviation Division
Justine Ruff, Chair, Aviation Advisory Committee

State of the Aviation Division Address
Dan Harmon, Director, TxDOT Aviation Division

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. State Legislative Update
*Moderator:
State Senator Robert Nichols, Senate District 3
State Representative Armando “Mando” Martinez, House District 39*

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker (Frisco 1-5)
*Norman Garza, Executive Director, Texas Space Commission
Norman Garza, Texas Space Commission*

11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Buffet Lunch (Frisco 1-5)

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. I: Aviation Education (Frisco 7)
*Moderator: Dana Donati, CEO, Breaking Barriers
Steve Poston, FAA
Nicole Johnson, North Central Texas Council of Governments
Miller Scanlan, AMT Instructor, Crowley Independent School District
Michelle McConnell, US Aviation Academy
Christopher Coley, US Aviation Academy
Marvin Diaz, University of Texas at Arlington*

Preparing the workforce of tomorrow is critical to the continued success of the aviation industry. Our panel of experts will share insights into various aviation educational and outreach programs as well as initiatives designed to cultivate interest and talent in aviation and aerospace. This session will highlight efforts for K-12 students to encourage interest in STEM and aviation.

II: Environmental Requirements Overview (Frisco 8)
Sana Drissi, TxDOT Aviation

Gain a clear understanding of key environmental requirements for airport planning and operations. This session provides a practical overview of federal and state compliance obligations, including NEPA reviews, permitting, noise, air quality, and wildlife considerations. Learn when an environmental review is required and who to contact as well as how to navigate the process to meet the needs of your airport.

III: Compliance (Frisco 9)
*Gary J. Loftus, A.A.E. Lead Airports Compliance Program Manager
Airport Certification Safety Inspector, FAA Southwest Region
Michael Van Vliet, Director of Planning and Programming, TxDOT Aviation Division*

This session will summarize the importance of the airport compliance program and airport grant assurances. It will allow airport stakeholders to speak about current or past experience, gain clarification, and engage with the FAA and TxDOT Aviation staff on questions related to airport compliance.

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Break

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. I: Airfield Inspection Techniques and Practices (Frisco 7)
*Dakota Shaw, TxDOT Aviation Division
Konner Young, Airport Operations Manager, Meacham International Airport
Clinton Tuggle, C.M., Airport Manager, Cleburne Regional Airport*

Learn effective airfield inspection techniques to ensure safe, compliant airport operations. This session covers inspection best practices, common deficiencies, documentation requirements, and coordination with maintenance and operations staff. Gain practical tips to identify hazards, meet regulatory standards, and enhance airfield safety through consistent, thorough inspections.

II: Promoting Your Airport: Branding and Marketing for Small Airports (Frisco 8)
Lori Walderich, IdeaStudio Branding & Marketing

Discover practical branding and marketing strategies tailored for small airports. This session explores how to define your airport's identity, strengthen community engagement, leverage digital tools, and communicate your unique value. Learn actionable tactics to elevate visibility, attract partners, and build a compelling, sustainable brand presence.

III: Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP) (Frisco 9)
Michelle Burcham, Director, Grants and Administration, TxDOT Aviation

TxDOT's Aviation Division oversees the Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP), a cost-share program that offers grants to eligible Texas airports, for maintenance of qualified airside and landside airport asset/infrastructure needs. This session will provide more information on the RAMP program, including funding and eligibility requirements.

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Texas Airports Council Annual Meeting and Elections (Frisco 7)

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Networking in Exhibit Hall (Frisco 6)

THURSDAY APRIL 2, 2026

7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast in Exhibit Hall (Frisco 6)

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Airport 101 Guidebook Overview (Frisco 1-5)

Michael Van Vliet, Director, Planning and Programming, TxDOT Aviation Division

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Texas Aviation Economic Impact Study Update (Frisco 1-5)

Daniel Benson, TxDOT Aviation Division

Jeff Borowiec, Aviation Program Director, Woolpert

Greg Sanders, Senior Planner & Project Manager, Woolpert

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Capital Improvement Program Overview (Frisco 1-5)

Sean Newton, TxDOT Aviation Division

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Break (Frisco 6)

Morning Breakout Sessions

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

I: Advancing/Emerging Technologies I: Advanced Air Mobility in Texas (Frisco 7)

*Sergio Roman, Director, Emerging Aviation Technology, TxDOT Aviation Division
Ernest Huffman, North Central Texas Council of Governments
Dr. Gus Khankarli, City of Dallas
Mitchell Davies, Director of Aviation, Sugar Land Regional Airport*

With recent developments at the federal level, Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is moving toward reality. This session will explore how Texas is preparing for the future with AAM at both the state and local levels. Panelists will discuss statewide and regional planning efforts, landside access needs, and how airports can prepare for AAM.

II: Airspace Protection and Procedure Development (Obstruction Surveys) (Frisco 8)
*Daniel Benson, TxDOT Aviation Division
Derek Mayo, Garver
Tony Lombardi, Airport Manager, Gillespie County Airport*

This session focuses on safeguarding navigable airspace through accurate obstruction identification, data collection, and analysis. The session covers survey methods, new tools to support analysis, and procedure design to support safe instrument and visual flight operations while enabling compatible land use development around airports.

III: IIJA and Federal Funding Overview (Frisco 9)
*Moderator: Dan Harmon, Director, TxDOT Aviation Division
Jesse Carriger, Manager, Infrastructure Branch, Planning and Programming, Office of Airports, Federal Aviation Administration*

This session provides a high-level overview of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the federal funding programs available to support airport and pavement maintenance projects. Participants will hear from the FAA on accessing the remaining funding and have an opportunity to ask questions on IIJA programs as well as federal funding for airports more broadly.

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Plated Luncheon (Frisco 1-5)
Art Contest Awards sponsored by National Business Aviation Association

Texas Aviation Awards Program sponsored by the Texas Airports Council

- National/Regional Airport of the Year
- Local/Basic/Unclassified Airport of the Year
- State Airport of the Year
- Airport Professional of the Year
- Airport Project of the Year
- Aviation Educator of the Year (K-12)
- RAMP Coordinator of the Year

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

I: Advancing/Emerging Technologies II: Digitization of Airports for Planning and Maintenance (Frisco 7)
*Will Graffis, TxDOT Aviation Division
Daniel Benson, TxDOT Aviation Division
Bret Gardner, gNEXT
Tony Lombardi, Airport Manager, Gillespie County Airport*

Digitization of Airports explores how new tools can transform airport asset management. The session will highlight the experience with digitizing one Texas airport; lessons learned, benefits, and challenges.

II: Importance of AWOS (*Frisco 8*)

Troy Kimmel AMS CBM, Owner/Meteorologist, KimCo Meteorological Services

Victor Murphy, Meteorologist, KimCo Meteorological Services

This Importance of AWOS session examines how Automated Weather Observing Systems provide timely, accurate aviation weather data. The session discusses system components, siting, maintenance, and data dissemination, and explains how AWOS supports flight safety, operational decision-making, regulatory compliance, and continuity of operations at towered and non-towered airports during all weather conditions nationwide. In addition, we'll talk about how the weather observations that they produce actually improve and validate weather forecasts and serve as an economic growth engine for your community!! Bring your AWOS and weather questions and Troy and Victor will try to answer them for you!

III: Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP) (*Frisco 9*)

Michelle Burcham, Director, Grants and Administration, TxDOT Aviation Division

Missed the first RAMP breakout session? Here's your second chance to learn all about the Routine Airport Maintenance Program. TxDOT's Aviation Division oversees the Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP), a cost-share program that offers grants to eligible Texas airports, for maintenance of qualified airside and landside airport asset/infrastructure needs. This session will provide more information on the RAMP program, including funding and eligibility requirements.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Break (*Frisco 6*)

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Sponsor/Agent Process (*Frisco 1-5*)

Michael Van Vliet, Director, Planning and Programming, TxDOT Aviation Division

Sean Newton, TxDOT Aviation Division

5:30pm Dinner on your own

FRIDAY APRIL 3, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast Buffet (*Frisco 6*)

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Airport Manager's Roundtable (*Frisco 1-5*)

Moderator: Sharlette Wright, Airport Manager, Mid-Way Regional Airport

Stacey Batch, Airport Manager, Taylor Municipal Airport

Gary Lee Davis, Director of Airports, San Patricio County

Got questions? We have answers! This session provides attendees with an open forum to ask questions and engage a panel of experienced airport managers. No formal presentations will be made during the session, but the panel members will share their experiences and thoughts on questions and issues brought up by the moderator and those attending this session. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions about any issues and concerns at their airports. This forum is designed to provide an exchange of information and ideas among airport professionals.

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. FAA Update and TxDOT/FAA Listening Session

Ignacio Flores, Director, Southwest Region, Federal Aviation Administration

Rodney Clark, Manager, Texas Airports District Office, FAA

Dan Harmon, Director, TxDOT Aviation Division