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Demand for corp. jets fuels airport expansions

Temple the latest to add hangar space

Premium content from Austin Business Journal by Vicky Garza, Staff Writer

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Draughon-Miller Central Texas Regional Airport in Temple recently completed a \$2 million expansion in response to a growing demand for corporate hangar space around Austin.

General aviation, including corporate planes, in Central Texas is being energized due to more companies and individuals choosing private over commercial flights. There are now more than a dozen airports around Austin for corporate fliers.

With support for general aviation limited at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport — in terms of the number of fixed-base operators to provide support services, repair stations and hangar space — and no plans for expansion in the near future, these smaller airports are growing to fill that need.

“Time is money, and general aviation is a valuable tool” that executives can use to travel throughout Texas, and sometimes outside of Texas, cheaper than on commercial airlines, said [Jay Carpenter](#), past president of the Texas Aviation Association.

Also, as companies look to grow and expand, many don’t like the time delays and restrictions that come with commercial airlines. Consequently, many are buying planes or

investing in fractional ownership of planes, Pflugerville Economic Development Corp. Executive Director [Floyd Akers](#) said. Similar to vacation time-share ownership, fractional ownership entitles its joint owners to a given number of hours of use annually.

Charlie Bravo Charter LLC owner [Rene Banglesdorf](#) has seen an uptick in companies buying business aircraft in Central Texas and throughout the country, which she sees as an indicator that the market for pre-owned business aircraft is recovering.

And companies that buy planes, which range from \$500,000 to \$10 million, will want to protect their investment by storing them in hangars out of the elements, Carpenter said.

It was food service supply chain company McLane Company Inc. that got the ball rolling at Draughon-Miller airport. The Temple-based company wanted to build a corporate hangar at the airport, but there were no sites available.

The airport, owned and operated by the city of Temple, partnered with the Temple Reinvestment Zone — a designation that enables a local government to finance needed infrastructural improvements within a defined area — to fund the expansion.

“The airport expansion was critical for the city because of the great deal of corporate headquarters in the area,” said [Charley Ayres](#), director of business development for Temple Economic Development Corp.

Many of those executives use private air service, and the expansion makes the Temple airport more attractive, he said. Also, there is less air traffic to compete with.

Companies such as McLane, Scott & White Healthcare and Fikes Wholesale Inc. have planes parked at Draughon-Miller.

The \$2 million in funding was used to install utilities, build a taxiway, erect a fence and build a road to provide access to the airport’s new 100-acre tract, which is shovel-ready for additional corporate hangars.

McLane recently completed construction of its 24,585-square-foot hangar on the new tract, and the Temple EDC is working with a couple of companies that need access to a runway and are interested in using airport property.

Built just last year, the Austin Executive Airport closer to Austin’s northern border has already had to expand. Construction of a \$1.5 million, 26,650-square-foot hangar was completed in July, and it is about 75 percent leased.

Part of its growth can be attributed to its newness. Before it opened, Austin was the largest metropolitan area without a general aviation reliever airport serving the corporate community.

Although the airport is in Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction, it is giving the city of Pflugerville an opportunity to land new business.

A high-end food service company that would bring at least 20 full-time jobs with it is looking closely at Pflugerville because of the airport, Akers said. The company is looking for space near the airport, where the CEO has his plane parked.

Building new hangars is expensive, but the payback, in the form of the economic impact from general aviation, is huge, Carpenter said.

Temple and Austin Executive get this, he said, and it will become apparent when the Formula One race takes place in November at the Circuit of the Americas.

"Most of the luxury jets arriving for that event will be forced to land" outside Travis County because there is not enough hangar or tie-down space, Carpenter said.

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