
History

Alabama's role in aviation began in 1935 when the Alabama Legislature adopted Act 493. The Aeronautics Commission was established by Act 493 and it then consisted of seven members, with five appointed by the Governor for staggered terms of four years. The remaining two were statutory members, who served by virtue of their appointments as Directors of the Alabama Departments of Public Safety and Transportation.

In 1945, the Aeronautics Commission was enlarged and changed to the Alabama Department of Aeronautics. Under this reorganization, the Aeronautics Department was defined as consisting of the Department, the Director of Aeronautics, who is the Executive Officer, and the staff. The Department was given general supervision over all phases of aeronautics within the State of Alabama. Funding for the Department's operations was secured when the Legislature adopted the Aviation Gasoline Tax Allocation Act (Act 367). Act 367 dedicated all aviation gas taxes to aviation related purposes; therefore the operations of the Department are not a burden on the general taxpayers of the state.

In May 2000, the Alabama Department of Aeronautics merged with the Alabama Department of Transportation. The Aeronautics Commission remained intact and now serves in an advisory capacity to the Transportation Director.

Mission

To serve the local airport operators and general public by assuring that aviation fuel taxes are spent on projects and research that will preserve and enhance Alabama's air transportation system. Ensuring the long-term safety and efficiency of Alabama's airports is essential to the state's transportation system.

Alabama Airport Facts

Alabama has approximately 235 airport facilities, including both public and privately owned airports and heliports. Of those, approximately 92 are open to the public and 8 of these are privately owned. There are 6 that currently offer commercial service in the State of Alabama.

Landing Area Site Evaluations

The staff of the Aeronautics Bureau performs site evaluations for proposed new landing sites. State law requires that all proposed landing sites must be inspected and approved by the Alabama Department of Transportation prior to the acquisition of land or the construction of any airport or heliport that is intended for public use. The purpose of the site evaluation is to assure that the property and its use will conform to minimum standards of safety. Except in the case of a personal use airfield, any person interested

in constructing a landing site on his or her property must contact the Aeronautics Bureau prior to proceeding with any construction.

Persons interested in constructing an airport or heliport are urged to contact the Aeronautics Bureau for more information about evaluations for proposed landing sites.

Airport Planning and Design

The Aeronautics Bureau recognizes the key role planning plays in the successful development of airport projects. The Bureau has a knowledgeable staff that can provide technical assistance to airport sponsors and consulting firms serving them. The planning staff meets with airport sponsors to discuss future airport improvement projects and assist in the prioritizing of projects to ensure the airport is in compliance with state licensing standards and the FAA airport design standards. The Bureau provides assistance in the selection of engineering consulting firms and the development of scopes of service. To meet the requirements for State and/or Federal funding, the Aeronautics Bureau reviews and approves all planning/engineering contracts and fee proposals. Whenever a project requires an independent cost analysis, the Aeronautics Bureau conducts the analysis in accordance with appropriate guidelines.

The Aeronautics Bureau provides assistance to airport sponsors in preparing comprehensive airport planning documents. All general aviation airport master plans, airport layout plans, capital improvement plans, and other planning documents are reviewed and approved by the Bureau. Most of these documents are necessary for grant applications to the FAA and/or State for funding consideration. By coordinating these items with the planning staff, determinations are made on the project's eligibility, and recommendations are often suggested to enable the project to better compete for funding.

Obstructions to Air Navigation

The Aeronautics Bureau is responsible for reviewing the proposed construction of tall structures statewide. The proposed structures are evaluated to determine if their construction will result in the temporary or permanent establishment of a hazard to air navigation. Under current state law, the Alabama Department of Transportation has the authority to prohibit or restrict the construction of tall structures if a determination is made that it will create a hazard to aircraft navigation.

Airport Engineering

The Aeronautics Bureau staff provides technical assistance to project sponsors and their consulting engineers from project design through construction. Two quality control design reviews are required for each project to ensure that state and federal guidelines are met and to recommend engineering practices resulting in cost savings in construction and maintenance for the airport. These reviews cover all phases of design including geo-technical, pavement, geo-metrics, drainage, and electrical designs. When

practicable, the use of ALDOT standards, specifications, and detail drawings are recommended, thereby increasing the efficiency of project design and construction. Construction supervision is typically the responsibility of consulting engineers, however the Aeronautics Bureau staff makes periodic site visits to projects under construction and works closely with project engineers and contractors when reviewing change orders and project modifications. It is our goal to design and construct airport projects in the most efficient and cost effective manner allowed by state and federal standards considering the maintenance and operations responsibilities of airport owners and operators.

Grant Management and Accounting

The State of Alabama has been providing funding assistance to Alabama's airports since 1945. In addition to providing the matching funds needed to assist with an airport's planning and construction projects, the staff of the Aeronautics Bureau furnishes guidance and assistance with the draw down and disburse both federal and state matching funds. The staff can assist the airport with all the invoicing and accounting aspects of an airport's projects. For example, the staff can act as the airport's agent to set up the project account with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), draw down an airport's federal funds, combine these funds with state matching monies, and issue a check to the airport on a monthly basis. The staff will work with airport personnel to coordinate and establish both state and federal invoice payment arrangements. Project payment requests are processed by the staff when they arrive in the bureau's office by reviewing the invoices for completeness, accuracy and eligibility. Payment of both federal and state funds is made to airports on a monthly basis

Aviation Related Links

National Association of State Aviation Officials www.nasao.org

Federal Aviation Administration www.faa.gov/airports/southern

Aviation Council of Alabama www.aviationcouncilofalabama.org

[Aeronautics Portal](#)