

AZ Flyer News

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ADOT'S AERONAUTICS GROUP SERVES ARIZONA'S AIRPORTS

By Dani Weber, Senior Communications Specialist

It's been little more than a century since the Wright brothers flew the first flying machine just outside of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and modern air travel is almost unrecognizable from its humble roots. Today, the Aeronautics Group handles the business end of airport development in Arizona.

"The Aeronautics Department was set up in statutes in 1963," former Aeronautics Group Manager Michael Klein said. "From 1963 to 1965, the Grand Canyon Airport was designed, built and open for business. Then the governor decided we needed a joint transportation agency."

From that time until 1974, the Aeronautics Department acted in the capacity of Arizona's aviation agency, Klein explained, and was solely responsible for air travel in Arizona. In July 1974, the governor merged the Aeronautics Department and the Arizona Highway Department — together making the Arizona Department of Transportation. From then until the early 2000s, the Aeronautics Division, as it was known then, took care of aircraft registrations and oversaw operations at the Grand Canyon National Park Airport.

The Aeronautics Division functioned mostly autonomously. Anything having to do with aviation went through that division. Then in the early 2000s, the Aeronautics Division was reorganized within ADOT: the aircraft registration unit was sent to the Motor Vehicle Division, the airport development group was sent to the Multimodal Planning Division and the Grand Canyon National State Park Airport was organized under the Administrative Services Division.

Klein, who spent 11 years as an airport development consultant and 18 years managing four commercial service airports before coming to ADOT, still remembers his time with the Aeronautics Division. "My time there was one of my most enjoyable and productive years. My time with ADOT gave me the greatest amount of satisfaction and enjoyment."

Nowadays, the Aeronautics Group is dedicated to dispersing grant funding to eligible capital improvement projects at qualifying airports. There are 67 airports in their system and \$20 million to allocate each year. That funding is usually divided four different ways:

- Matching FAA grants for runways, taxiways, aprons etc. (90% FAA / 5% ADOT / 5% airport)
- Funding airport improvement projects directly (90% ADOT / 10% airport)
- Funding pavement maintenance (90% ADOT / 10% airport)
- Conducting planning studies, including economic impact studies of airports

According to the last Economic Impact Study (2013), aviation generates \$58 billion to the state annually. Nearly 17% of all Arizona jobs are related to the aviation industry — that's about 410,000 jobs generated, with an annual payroll of \$21.1 billion. Keeping Arizona's airports in good working order is critical to supporting one of Arizona's most important economic assets.

The Aeronautics Group continues today to work with Arizona's airports to make sure they remain functional to their customers. Air travel is a vital part of Arizona's economy, and ADOT is an important piece that helps the system work.



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<https://apps.azdot.gov/mvd/AircraftRegRenewal/default.aspx>



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