



Photo: Grand Canyon National Airport



Group Manager Update

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In This Issue:

ADOT GROUP
MANAGER'S REPORT

AIRPORT OF THE YEAR

ENGINEER'S CORNER

NAVAJO NATION MTG.

SPOTLIGHT

REGULATORY ROUNDUP

UPCOMING ACIP

CONTACT INFO

It was great seeing so many of you at the recent AzAA Spring Conference. Opportunities to connect in person are always valuable, and we truly appreciate the continued collaboration and partnership across Arizona's aviation community.

I would like to welcome Tim Morrison to the team. After 13 years with the FAA, Tim joins us from the ADO where he served most recently as Lead Engineer. We are thrilled to have his experience and perspective supporting Arizona's airports.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for being selected as this year's AzAA President's Award recipient. This recognition is truly an honor. A special thank you to Immediate Past President Ed Rose and the entire AzAA Board for their support and leadership.

As we enter the ACIP season, our team remains committed to supporting you throughout the process. Whether it's assisting with ADOT's ACIP portal, navigating funding opportunities, or ensuring your programs align with state and federal requirements, we are here to help.

We encourage you to stay engaged with your assigned grant manager and begin preparing early to ensure a smooth and successful ACIP cycle. Thank you for your continued partnership and for all that you do to support Arizona's airport system.

2026 ADOT Airport of the Year

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK AIRPORT

ADOT Aeronautics is proud to recognize Grand Canyon National Park Airport (GCN) as the 2026 Airport of the Year. This award highlights a year of outstanding achievement in safety, operations, innovation, and community engagement.

Under the leadership of Airport Manager David Reffner, Grand Canyon National Park Airport demonstrated a strong commitment to safety, maintaining full FAA Part 139 compliance and achieving zero discrepancies during its most recent FAA inspection. The airport also strengthened regional preparedness through large-scale emergency exercises and continued investment in security and life-safety systems.

GCN’s operational performance in 2025 was exceptional. The airport successfully completed four major airfield and landside projects within a 28-day full runway closure—on schedule and under budget—while maintaining coordination with FAA, ADOT, and stakeholders at a high-traffic tourism airport. This effort earned statewide recognition, earning the airport a 2026 Build Arizona Award.

Environmental stewardship remains a priority. GCN advanced its commitment to sustainability through full implementation of Dark Skies-compliant lighting and the transition to environmentally friendly firefighting foam, helping protect the Grand Canyon’s unique natural environment.

The airport also continues to lead in innovation. GCN was selected by the FAA to implement Surface Awareness Initiative (SAI) technology, enhancing real-time aircraft tracking and runway safety. Additional improvements in digital systems have streamlined operations and improved the user experience.



Engineer's Corner

The airport environment is a busy and complex place, home to both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft operating on runways, taxiways, aprons, and through-the-fence facilities.

Achieving safety and completing a successful project in this environment requires close coordination among numerous disciplines, organizations, and stakeholders. These include pilots, engineers, airport managers, air traffic controllers, flight procedure specialists, flight standards inspectors, business owners, technical operations personnel, security staff, grant managers, airport neighbors, and others.

One recurring issue is the need for improved project communication. Breakdowns often occur when one discipline loses sight of the overall mission or operates independently of others – a situation sometimes referred to as “stove piping.” For example, engineering professionals may excel in pavement design yet remain unaware of the Air Traffic Control Tower’s Safety Risk Management process, or they might schedule a pre-construction meeting without inviting key stakeholders.

The overarching mission is the safe operation and construction of airport facilities with minimal impact on stakeholders – striving for zero construction accidents, zero operational disruptions, and zero adverse effects on the National Airspace System.

Recent project success with integrating the various disciplines, lines of business and stakeholders include the Tucson Airfield Safety Enhancement project taking the runway 11R-29L out of service and processing a runway number change due to magnetic variation (MagVar) where the physical work, procedures and runway number change all occurred the same night. The other is Grand Canyon National Airport runway rehabilitation where the team came together for a safe project that eliminated a Runway Incursion Mitigation point along with the many tenant and stakeholder issues. A shout out to Victor Palma at Tucson Airport Authority and David Reffner at the Grand Canyon National Airport.



Working in isolation within the airport environment is not only inefficient but potentially dangerous. To ensure success, consider the following:

1. Establish strong project management foundations – Include a communications plan, risk register, and stakeholder engagement strategy. Project management is not always covered in engineering or business curricula, so resources like www.pmi.org can be valuable for developing these skills.
2. Understand how operations interconnect – Take time to learn how your project fits within the broader airfield system. This includes public outreach (general public, FAA Runway Safety Action Teams, FAA Flight Standards, airport tenants, and users), proper design coordination, and collaboration with the FAA, ADOT, security personnel, and other key stakeholders.
3. Gain perspective from the cockpit – If you are an engineer designing runways, taxiways, or aprons, spend time in a cockpit with an instructor. Experiencing the environment firsthand makes visual cues, signage, communications, and geometry much more meaningful when designing from a pilot’s point of view.

In summary, recognizing complexity and communicating is essential. Being passive is costly. Spend time in a cockpit to understand airport design. Should anyone like to discuss this article or need to reach me, my phone number is (602) 901-8315 or you can reach me at tmorrison@azdot.gov.

Navajo Nation Meeting

In March, ADOT Aeronautics and the FAA hosted a partnership meeting with the Navajo Nation, bringing together key stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and support aviation development within the region.

During the meeting, both ADOT Aeronautics and the FAA provided overviews of their respective programs, funding opportunities, and resources available to support airport and aviation-related projects. The discussion generated strong interest and meaningful dialogue, with a clear focus on building long-term partnerships and identifying opportunities to enhance aviation infrastructure.

We appreciate the Navajo Nation's engagement and look forward to continued collaboration in advancing aviation initiatives that benefit their communities.



Spotlight: Tim Morrison



Tim Morrison is our new State Airport Engineer. Mr. Morrison comes to us from the Federal Aviation Administration Phoenix Airport District office where he served for 13 years, first as a civil engineer/program manager and then as the Lead Engineer. Mr. Morrison is a Registered Civil Engineer in the State of Arizona, Project Management Professional and Licensed Private Pilot (Single Engine Land).

Mr. Morrison was born in Prescott, Arizona with a long family history in Arizona. In fact, his roots in Arizona go back generations, as is made evident by the plaque on Buckey O'Neill Monument statue where his great grandfather on his mother's side is listed as one of the Arizona volunteers during the Spanish-American war commonly referred to as the "Rough Riders." Mr. Morrison was raised in Tucson and graduated from the University of Arizona. Prior to distinguishing himself as a dedicated public servant at the FAA, Mr. Morrison worked in both public and private sector roles.

Regulatory Round Up

We know it can be daunting to keep up with all grant requirements and compliance obligations, and we're here to help you stay on track.

Sponsors are already aware that Grant Reimbursement Requests (GRRs) are due quarterly (or that notification should be provided if none are being submitted). Use that quarterly milestone as a built-in checkpoint to review your overall project compliance.

Ask yourself: Do I need to update my grant schedules? Are any quarterly design reports due? Are there any outstanding deliverables or other reporting requirements?

Regular check-ins with your assigned grant manager—ideally on a quarterly basis—can also help identify and address items early. Staying proactive and using these natural milestones will keep your project in compliance and moving forward efficiently.

Upcoming ACIP

As we enter the Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) season, the FAA along with ADOT Aeronautics will be meeting with airport sponsors to discuss current and future project needs.

ACIP meetings are voluntary but strongly encouraged, as they provide an important opportunity to review project priorities, discuss funding, and ensure alignment with program goals.

Key Dates:

- ACIP Meetings: March 2 – May 29
- ACIP Portal Passwords Sent: By Apr 17, 2026
- ACIP Submittal Deadline (Portal): July 31, 2026

We encourage sponsors to come prepared with updated project information to make the most of their scheduled meeting.

ADOT Aeronautics Office Relocation

ADOT Aeronautics has relocated to a new office location. Please update your records with our new mailing and physical address:
 206 S. 17th Ave, MD 426M, Phoenix, AZ 85007
All other contact information remains unchanged.

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Thank you for continuing to share your photo submissions! If we did not use your images in this issue, we will most likely use them in an upcoming issue.