



# Service Stars

## FBO chains are growing again

SPECIAL REPORT

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by Matt Thurber

It seems that not a week goes by without an FBO company announcing either the acquisition of more FBOs or a one-FBO company buying half a dozen more FBOs to establish its own growing chain. Witness, for example, Volo Aviation's rapid accumulation of five bases, when just last year the company had one FBO to supplement its primary charter business. See also Encore FBO's move into the European market following the purchase of the Landmark Aviation FBOs, charter and sales businesses from DAE Aerospace. The latest surprise, at least as this was being written in late February, was Signature Flight Support's announcement of intent to buy Hawker Beechcraft's FBOs (but not the maintenance operations).

Given the frothy activity in the FBO marketplace, we thought it would be interesting to take a snapshot of the chain structure and list all the FBO companies that own three or more FBOs and those FBO locations. We fully expect this list to change; next year either these companies will own even more FBOs or the organizations that provide the money for acquisitions will have decided that the business isn't as lucrative as they had thought.

One thing is for sure, however: the rapid recent growth of FBO chains has no precedent. Earlier attempts to build chains never saw companies owning as many FBOs as some of these companies do now.

Finally, is there some number of FBOs that is simply too hard for a company to handle? So far, the overall number of FBOs owned hasn't slowed any of these companies, so there doesn't appear to be a

negative to building a huge chain of FBOs. But time will tell if these are short-term successful businesses or another step on the road to building national networks of aviation service businesses.

### Encore and Landmark

Dubai Aerospace Enterprise made no secret of its plan to sell the FBO business that it acquired as part of the \$1.8 billion purchase of Landmark Aviation and Standard Aero from private equity firm The Carlyle Group. What is not known is whether DAE's owners really wanted to sell the FBOs or if they were doing so to avoid scrutiny from security-conscious politicians.

This would not be the first time that foreign ownership has attracted the attention of those in Washington. When DP World announced plans to buy marine terminal operating company P&O in February 2006, a political firestorm ensued. DP World is wholly owned by the government of Dubai, and U.S. politicians were concerned about the security implications of foreign ownership of marine terminal operations in the U.S., which in fact were already owned by foreign-owned P&O. When the politicians viewed a U.S. Coast Guard intelligence analysis about the proposed DP World buy of P&O, they used that information to bolster their case. DP World, however, had already submitted to scrutiny by the U.S. Treasury Department's Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which approved the deal.

The DAE purchase of Landmark Aviation, which consisted of multiple FBOs

and maintenance facilities at major airports in the U.S., was also subject to the CFIUS approval process, and the sale went forward without objection. None of the politicians who had been so vociferous about DP World raised any concerns, at least in public, about DAE and Landmark. DAE, which is partially owned by Dubai's government, went forward with its plans to sell the Landmark FBOs and last November announced that it signed a definitive agreement for Encore FBO to acquire DAE's Airport Services Group, which included the Landmark FBOs, charter operations and some other businesses for \$436 million. The deal closed on February 29. Encore is backed by private-equity firm GTCR Golder Rauner.

The Encore name, it turned out, was short-lived, and after completing the

transaction, Encore adopted the Landmark brand name. Encore president and CEO Dan Bucaro is CEO of the new Landmark Aviation. Most of the current Encore/Landmark leadership helped form the Trajen chain, which was swallowed up by Atlantic Aviation.

### Signature Flight Support

The Signature FBO chain owned by BBA Aviation continues to grow and still has the most non-U.S. FBOs of any of the FBO networks and the most FBOs overall. Last year, Signature bought four Executive Beechcraft FBOs but decided to operate them under their original brand name instead of absorbing them into the Signature network.

Signature made a bigger move on February 22 when Hawker Beechcraft announced that it planned to sell its fuel and line





Tac Air Denver

service operations (but not the associated maintenance service centers) to BBA Aviation for \$128.5 million. Hawker Beechcraft had earlier announced plans to sell the FBO network to focus on building its core service center operations, which were a better fit with the Hawker Beechcraft manufacturing business. The transaction should close next month and will bring BBA's total roster of FBOs to 115 facilities, easily the largest FBO holdings of any company.

Signature did sell one FBO last year, its facility in Oxnard, Calif., to Harold Lee, at the time the owner of two Million Air FBOs. Lee, however, sold his Van Nuys, Calif. Million Air to Maguire Aviation, so he still owns two facilities.

#### Atlantic Aviation

With 68 FBOs in its chain now, Atlantic Aviation almost doubled in size last year. Backed by its owner, publicly traded Macquarie Infrastructure, Atlantic bought the 24-FBO Mercury Air Centers chain last year and added FBOs at Santa Monica and San Jose, Calif., and Stewart International Airport in New Windsor, N.Y. In early March, Atlantic Aviation added three more FBOs purchased from SevenBar Enterprises.

Atlantic's strategy, according to CEO Lou Pepper, is to have an FBO at a large number of destinations so customers can find a familiar brand and level of service wherever they go. Atlantic isn't just trying to be the biggest chain, he added: "Our number-one concern is that we have to be better, not just bigger."

#### Ross Aviation

Jeffrey Ross, president and CEO of Ross Aviation, believes

that now is a good time to be an FBO seller, and that's not just because he is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to buy more FBOs. In early February, Ross Aviation purchased a majority share of Miami Executive Aviation at Opa Locka Airport in Miami. Ross Aviation owns jetCenter-branded FBOs and other facilities that retain their original brand.

At Miami Executive, as at the other FBOs that Ross purchases, the existing management stays in place, so Fabio Alexander and his team will continue running the FBO. "We think that Fabio will do a great job," Ross said, "and we're glad to have him."

Ross's reason for buying into the Miami FBO market is rapid growth in that area and Opa Locka's proximity to downtown Miami, only seven miles away. "We think it's a great market," he said.

Right now it's a seller's market in the FBO business, according to Ross, due to continued strong buying enthusiasm and low capital gains taxes. "I recommend that everyone who wants to sell should sell," he said.

Ross saw some possibilities with the Landmark FBOs that were for sale before Encore FBO bought the chain, but he would have been interested only in Landmark's larger FBOs at major metropolitan airports. The many smaller Landmark facilities, like most of the Rhode Island FBOs, likely have a hard time making money, he suggested. "We're trying to buy profitable FBOs."

Nevertheless, Ross is impressed with what the Encore leaders have accomplished and believes they'll be successful with their purchase of Landmark Aviation's FBO and charter busi-

nesses. "The Trajen guys made out handsomely by buying lots of FBOs previously," he said, including smaller secondary-market facilities. "At the end of the day, they were rewarded for doing so."

While there are many buyers seeking FBO properties and not that many desirable FBOs on the market, the recent economic tremors are causing a slowdown in acquisitions, according to Ross. "There is ongoing consolidation but the question is, how small of an FBO will be qualified for that consolidation program?"

#### SevenBar Enterprises

Just before this issue went to press, SevenBar Enterprises sold its three FBOs in Albuquerque and Farmington, N.M., and Hailley, Idaho, to Atlantic Aviation. Interviewed before the transaction took place, Bill Koch, president and COO of SevenBar Enterprises, which also owns a charter company, said, "We had a good year just behind us and a good year under way. We're pleased with the way the market is going."

Koch isn't talking only about the record number of business jet deliveries last year or the huge backlogs extending far into the future but something closer to home. "I'm pleased to see the continuing diversification in growth of business aviation users," he said. "Every day—and I fly commercial way too often—I see more and more people have reached the point of being fed up with commercial aviation." And now business travelers have many more diverse opportunities, both in cost and available equipment, besides the airlines, and consumers are rapidly exploring all

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## Survey Methodology

The annual **AIN** FBO survey is now in its second year with an online-only ballot form, and **AIN** has conducted the Survey of American FBOs 21 times thus far, soliciting readers' opinions about FBOs that they visited during the previous year. For the 2008 FBO Survey, **AIN** sent a postcard inviting 14,781 subscribers to complete the online survey form and e-mailed invitations to 11,151 subscribers. As always, for statistical purposes at least 40 ratings are required for a U.S. FBO to be listed in the final results, or 25 for non-U.S. FBOs.

The **AIN** FBO Survey asks readers to rate FBOs that they frequent in four key categories: line service, passenger amenities; pilot amenities and services; and facilities. For each of the four categories, the survey participant can assign a number from one to 10, one being worst and 10 the highest rating.

To arrive at the averages for the categories, each FBO's ratings for each of the four categories are added, and the resulting sum is divided by the number of responses received for that FBO. The overall average for that FBO is computed by adding the FBO's four category scores and dividing that sum by the total number of responses received in all four categories.

**AIN** received 1,963 properly completed survey returns, for a return rate of 13.3 percent, down from last year's 22.6 percent and 2,634 completed surveys. According to Forecast International, which designed and administered the survey in collaboration with **AIN**, "This response is still a quite valid basis for determining subscriber opinion."

Readers provided a total of 33,725 evaluations for facilities worldwide and added 185 via write-in opinions. A total of 2,074 respondents responded to the survey (some did not complete the survey) and rated an average of 16 FBOs each, one more than during the 2007 survey.

This year, **AIN** expanded the number of FBOs on the ballot to a total of 1,420 facilities and service providers, up from 1,404 last year. Each year, **AIN** will add FBOs and facilities that are seeing increased traffic from **AIN** readers, based on previous years' write-ins. More rest-of-world facilities will be added every year because more **AIN** readers are traveling internationally.

The results of the 2008 survey show some interesting moves up and down the list of the Americas' 40 top-rated FBOs. Wilson Air Center's Memphis, Tenn. base remains at the top of the list, and the FBO's rating even climbed above the 9.00 mark, to 9.03. The facility is the only Americas FBO to garner a rating above 9.00.

Pentastar Aviation/Million Air Pontiac moved into second place from last year's third-place position, displacing perennial favorite AirFlite, which slid to third place.

Making its first appearance in the top-40 list and the listing results, too, is Falcon Trust Air of Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport, making a strong showing at fourth place with a rating of 8.79, hot on the heels of AirFlite's 8.81. Fort Worth's Texas Jet is also new to the list, with a respectable showing of 13th place.

The City of Sugar Land (Texas) took the fifth spot in the top-40 list, up from eighth last year and proving once again that a government-run FBO can wow its patrons. No other government-owned and -run FBO made it on this year's list and Sugar Land was also the only government-owned FBO on last year's Top 40 list.

Two Dallas Love Field FBOs—Business Jet Center and Million Air—consistently appear on the top-40 list, and this time both moved higher on the list. Business Jet Center was 15th last year and number seven this year, while Million Air moved to number eight from last year's 11th position. While Regal Aviation appeared on last year's Top 40 list, it wasn't rated this year because it did not receive enough ballots. (Incidentally the FBO's name changed to Jet-Direct Aircraft Services.)

Banyan Air (Fort Lauderdale) and Premier Jet (Carlsbad, Calif.) tied for seventh position on this year's top-40 list. Both FBOs built elaborate and attractive new facilities recently and are likely enjoying the results of those efforts.

Well represented on the Top 40 list are non-U.S. FBOs in the Americas, including UVavemex and Manny Aviation in Toluca, Mexico; and Canadian FBOs Irving Aviation, Gander and Goose Bay, and Skyservice Avitat, Toronto. —M.T.



Sugar Land Terminal

POSITIVE IMAGE

### The Americas 40 Top-rated FBOs

The annual AIN FBO Survey lists top-rated facilities according to the survey responses from pilots, dispatchers and users of FBO facilities. This year, the Top 40 FBOs received overall scores of more than 8.000. The categories that users were asked to rate were line service; passenger amenities; pilot amenities; and facilities.

RANK	FBO	CITY	AIRPORT	OVERALL AVG.
1	Wilson Air Center	Memphis	Memphis International (MEM)	9.03
2	Pentastar Aviation Million Air Pontiac	Pontiac	Oakland County International (PTK)	8.88
3	AirFlite	Long Beach	Long Beach Airport Daugherty Field (LGB)	8.81
4	FalconTrust Air	Miami	Kendall-Tamiami Executive (TMB)	8.79
5	City of Sugar Land	Sugar Land	Sugar Land Regional (SGR)	8.74
6	Business Jet Center	Dallas	Dallas Love Field (DAL)	8.72
7	Million Air	Dallas	Addison (ADS)	8.68*
7	Banyan Air Service	Fort Lauderdale	Fort Lauderdale Executive (FXE)	8.68*
7	Premier Jet	Carlsbad	McClellan-Palomar (CRQ)	8.68*
10	Million Air	Minneapolis	St. Paul Downtown-Holman Field (STP)	8.64
11	Jet Aviation Palm Beach	West Palm Beach	Palm Beach International (PBI)	8.61
12	Meridian Teterboro	Teterboro	Teterboro (TEB)	8.59
13	Texas Jet	Fort Worth	Meacham International (FTW)	8.54
14	Monterey Jet Center	Monterey	Monterey Peninsula (MRY)	8.48
15	Million Air	Salt Lake City	Salt Lake City International (SLC)	8.47
16	Denver jetCenter	Denver	Centennial (APA)	8.46 †
16	Avitat Boca Raton	Boca Raton	Boca Raton (BCT)	8.46 †
16	Enterprise Jet Center	Houston	Hobby (HOU)	8.46 †
19	UVavemex	Toluca	Adolfo Lopez Mateos International (MMTO)	8.45
20	Vail Valley Jet Center	Eagle	Eagle County Regional (EGE)	8.44
21	Scottsdale Air Center	Scottsdale	Scottsdale Municipal (SDL)	8.44
22	Swift Aviation Services	Phoenix	Sky Harbor International (PHX)	8.42 ▲
22	National Jets	Fort Lauderdale	Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International (FLL)	8.42 ▲
24	Irving Aviation Services	Gander, Newfoundland	Gander International (CYQX)	8.40
25	Wilson Air Center	Charlotte	Douglas International (CLT)	8.39
26	Skyservice Avitat	Toronto, Ontario	Lester B. Pearson International (CYYZ)	8.38
27	Jet Aviation	Teterboro	Teterboro (TEB)	8.34
28	SheltAir Aviation Services	Jacksonville	Jacksonville International (JAX)	8.33
29	Avitat Westchester	White Plains	Westchester County (HPN)	8.32
30	Irving Aviation Services	Goose Bay, Newfoundland	Goose Bay (CYR)	8.31
31	Manny Aviation Services	Toluca	Adolfo Lopez Mateos International (MMTO)	8.29 ●
31	Yellowstone Jet Center	Bozeman	Gallatin Field (BZN)	8.29 ●
33	Million Air	Houston	Hobby (HOU)	8.27
34	Million Air	Anchorage	Ted Stevens Anchorage International (ANC)	8.25
35	Tampa International Jet Center	Tampa	Tampa International (TPA)	8.24
36	McKinley Air	Akron	Akron Canton Regional (CAK)	8.23
37	Sun Valley Aviation	Hailey	Friedman Memorial (SUN)	8.20
38	Jet Source	Carlsbad	McClellan-Palomar (CRQ)	8.19 †
38	Million Air	San Antonio	San Antonio International (SAT)	8.19 †
40	Stuart Jet Center	Stuart	Witham Field (SUA)	8.18 ◆
40	SheltAir Aviation Services	Fort Lauderdale	Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International (FLL)	8.18 ◆

\* Tied for 7th place † Tied for 16th place ▲ Tied for 22nd place ● Tied for 31st place † Tied for 38th place ◆ Tied for 40th place

Source: AIN 2008 Americas FBO Survey

Compiled by Jane Campbell from data provided by Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.

### Close But No Cigar – Non-U.S. Americas FBOs

The following FBOs in North America, South America and the Caribbean received 15 to 24 responses in the survey and therefore were not included in the overall survey rankings or the FBO insert, both of which required 25 responses.

FBO	CITY	AIRPORT	RESPONSES
FBO 2000 Antigua	Antigua	V.C. Bird International (TAPA)	24
Shell Aerocentre	Victoria	Victoria International (CYYJ)	22
Avitat Ottawa	Ottawa, Ontario	MacDonald-Cartier International (CYOW)	21
Million Air	San Juan	Fern. Dominici (TJIG)	21
Million Air	Vancouver, B.C.	Vancouver International (CYVR)	21
Million Air	San Juan	Fern. Dominici (TJIG)	21
Avitat-Atlantic	Halifax, Nova Scotia	Halifax International (CYHZ)	19
Serv-Air	La Romana	La Romana (MDLR)	19
Universal Aviation	Oranjestad	Reina Beatrix International (TNCA)	19
Aerocentre	Edmonton	Edmonton International (CYEG)	18
Alliance Aviation	St. Thomas	Cyril E. King (TIST)	18
Kelowna Shell Aerocentre	Kelowna, B.C.	Kelowna (CYLW)	18
Líder Signature	Rio de Janeiro	Rio de Janeiro Int'l Maestro Tom Jobim (SBGL)	18
Aerolineas Ejecutivas	Toluca	Adolfo Lopez Mateos International (MMTO)	16
Avitat Winnipeg (Central Aviation)	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Manitoba/Winnipeg International (CYWG)	16
Bahamas Air	Marsh Harbour	North Eleuthera (MYAM)	16
ICCS Mexico & Latin America	Puerta Vallarta	Lic. Diaz Ordaz (MMPR)	16
Irving Aviation Services	St. John's, Newfoundland	St. John's International (CYYT)	16
Líder Signature	São Paulo	Guarulhos International (SBGR)	16
Aerocentre	Ottawa, Ontario	MacDonald-Cartier International (CYOW)	15
Munser FBO	Buenos Aires	Ezeiza International (SAEZ)	15
SAE (Servicios Aéreos Estrella)	Toluca	Adolfo Lopez Mateos International (MMTO)	15

Source: AIN 2008 Americas FBO Survey

Compiled by Jane Campbell from data provided by Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.

### FBO Chains

In recent months, companies have been adding to their FBO stables.

#### Air Service Hawaii (6)

- Hilo, Hawaii (PHTO)
- Honolulu, Hawaii (PHNL)
- Kahului, Hawaii (PHOG)
- Kona, Hawaii (PHKO)
- Lanai, Hawaii (PHNY)
- Lihue, Hawaii (PHLI)

#### Atlantic (68, includes four non-Atlantic FBOs in Alaska)

- Albuquerque, N.M. (ABQ)
- Aspen, Colo. (ASE)
- Atlanta, Ga. (ATL)
- Atlanta, Ga. (PDK)
- Austin, Texas (AUS)
- Bakersfield, Calif. (BFL)
- Binghamton, N.Y. (BGM)
- Birmingham, Ala. (BHM)
- Bridgeport, Conn. (BDR)
- Burbank, Calif. (BUR)
- Burlington, Vt. (BTV)
- Casper, Wyo. (CPR)
- Charleston, S.C. (CHS)
- Chicago, Ill. (MDW)
- Chicago, Ill. (PWK)
- Cleveland, Ohio (CGF)
- Cleveland, Ohio (CLE)
- Corpus Christi, Texas (CRP)
- Dallas, Texas (ADS)
- Elmira, N.Y. (ELM)
- El Paso, Texas (ELP)
- Farmington, N.M. (FMN)
- Fort Wayne, Ind. (FWA)
- Fort Worth, Texas (FTW)
- Fresno, Calif. (FAT)
- Gulfport, Miss. (GPT)
- Hailey, Idaho (SUN)
- Hartford, Conn. (HFD)
- Hayward, Calif. (HWD)
- Houston, Texas (HOU)
- Houston, Texas (IAH)
- Jackson, Miss. (JAN)
- Johns Island, S.C. (JZI)
- Kissimmee, Fla. (ISM)
- Las Vegas, Nev. (LAS)
- Long Island, N.Y. (FRG)
- Los Angeles, Calif. (LAX)
- Louisville, Ky. (SDF)
- Nashville, Tenn. (BNA)
- New Orleans, La. (MSY)
- Newport News, Va. (PHF)
- New York City, N.Y. (6N5)
- Oklahoma City, Okla. (PWA)
- Ontario, Calif. (ONT)
- Orange County, Calif. (SNA)
- Palm Springs, Calif. (PSP)
- Philadelphia, Pa. (PHL)
- Philadelphia, Pa. (PNE)
- Phoenix, Ariz. (DVT)
- Pittsburgh, Pa. (PIT)
- Rifle, Colo. (RIL)
- Reno, Nev. (RNO)
- Sacramento, Calif. (MHR)
- San Jose, Calif. (SJC)
- Santa Barbara, Calif. (SBA)
- Santa Monica, Calif. (SMO)
- South Bend, Ind. (SBN)
- New Windsor, N.Y. (SWF)
- Stockton, Calif. (SCK)
- Teterboro, N.J. (TEB)
- Tucson, Ariz. (TUS)
- Tulsa, Okla. (TUL)
- Waukesha, Wis. (UES)
- Wilmington, Del. (ILG)

#### Avflight (5)

- Detroit, Mich. (YIP)
- Flint, Mich. (FNT)
- Harrisburg, Pa. (MDT)
- Lansing, Mich. (LAN)
- Saginaw, Mich. (MBS)

#### Bradley Pacific (5)

- Kona, Hawaii (PHKO)
- Lanai, Hawaii (PHNY)
- Lihue, Hawaii (PHLI)
- Honolulu, Hawaii (HNL)
- Kahului, Hawaii (PHOG)

#### Castle & Cooke Aviation (3)

- Everett, Wash. (PAE)
- Honolulu, Hawaii (PHNL)
- Van Nuys, Calif. (VNY)

#### Cutter Aviation (8)

- Albuquerque, N.M. (ABQ)
- Colorado Springs, Colo. (COS)
- Dallas, Texas (RBD)
- El Paso, Texas (ELP)
- McKinney, Texas (TKI)

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### Close But No Cigar – U.S. FBOs

The following U.S. FBOs received 30 to 39 responses in the survey and therefore were not included in the overall survey rankings or the FBO insert, both of which required 40 responses.

FBO	CITY	AIRPORT	RESPONSES
Atlantic	Kissimmee	Kissimmee Gateway (ISM)	39
Avitat Baltimore	Baltimore	Martin State Airport (MTN)	39
Corporate Wings	Cleveland	Cuyahoga County (CGF)	39
Duncan Aviation	Battle Creek	W.K. Kellogg (BTL)	39
Edwards Jet Center	Billings	Billings Logan International (BIL)	39
Prior Aviation	Buffalo	Buffalo Niagara International (BUF)	39
Signature Flight Support	Huntsville	Huntsville International-Carl T. Jones Field (HSV)	39
General Aviation Facility	Dallas	Dallas/Fort Worth International (DFW)	38
Henderson Executive Airport	Las Vegas	Henderson Executive Airport (HND)	38
Santa Fe AirCenter	Santa Fe	Santa Fe Municipal (SAF)	38
Signature Flight Support	St. Louis	Lambert-St. Louis International (STL)	38
Air Service Hawaii	Honolulu	Honolulu International (HNL)	37
Atlantic	Sacramento	Mather Field (MHR)	37
Clay Lacy Aviation	Seattle	Boeing Field/King County International (BFI)	37
Corporate Air	Pittsburgh	Allegheny County (AGC)	37
Cutter Aviation	El Paso	El Paso International (ELP)	37
Executive Beechcraft	Kansas City	Kansas City International (MCI)	37
Guardian Jet Center	Ontario	Ontario International (ONT)	37
Jet Aviation St. Louis	Cahokia	St. Louis Downtown (CPS)	37
Landmark Aviation	Charlottesville	Charlottesville-Albemarle (CHO)	37
Landmark Aviation	White Plains	Westchester County (HPN)	37
AAR Aircraft Service	Oklahoma City	Will Rogers World (OKC)	36
Alliance Aviation Services/Avitat Fort Worth	Fort Worth	Alliance (AFW)	36
Regional Jet Center	Fayetteville	Northwest Arkansas Regional (XNA)	36
SheltAir Aviation Services	St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg-Clearwater International (PIE)	36
ASIG	Detroit	Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County (DTW)	35
Atlantic Aero	Greensboro	Piedmont Triad International (GSO)	35
Delta Air Elite Jet Center	Cincinnati	Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International (CVG)	35
Executive Beechcraft	Kansas City	Kansas City International (MCI)	35
Metro Flight Services	Detroit	Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County (DTW)	35
The Ohio State University Airport	Columbus	Ohio State University (OSU)	35
Air Service Hawaii	Kahului	Kahului (PHOG)	34
Air Service Hawaii	Kailua-Kona	Kona International (PHKO)	34
Million Air	Van Nuys	Van Nuys (VNY)	34
Northern Air	Grand Rapids	Gerald R. Ford International (GRR)	34
Sun Jet Center	Vero Beach	Vero Beach Municipal (VRB)	34
Bradley Pacific Aviation	Honolulu	Honolulu International (HNL)	33
JetCenter South	Gulf Shores	Jack Edwards (JKA)	33
Montgomery Aviation	Montgomery	Montgomery Regional-Dannelly Field (MGM)	33
Signature Flight Support (formerly Carolina Air Center)	Hilton Head	Hilton Head (HXD)	33
Tri City Aviation	Bristol	Tri-Cities Regional (TRI)	33
Atlantic	Oklahoma City	Wiley Post (PWA)	32
Avflight	Harrisburg	Harrisburg International (MDT)	32
Elliott Aviation	Moline	Quad City International (MLI)	32
Hawker Beechcraft Services	Wichita	Wichita Mid-Continent (ICT)	32
JetDirect (formerly Regal Aviation)	Dallas	Dallas Love Field (DAL)	32
Landmark Aviation	Lakeland	Lakeland Linder (LAL)	32
Long Island Jet Center	Westhampton Beach	Francis G. Gabreski (FOK)	32
Mobile Air Center	Mobile	Mobile Regional (MOB)	32
SheltAir Aviation Services	Farmingdale	Republic (FRG)	32
Signature Flight Support	Memphis	Memphis International (MEM)	32
Yingling Aircraft	Wichita	Wichita Mid-Continent (ICT)	32
Atlantic	Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara Municipal (SBA)	31
Atlantic	Bridgeport	Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial (BDR)	31
Landmark Aviation	Greensboro	Piedmont Triad International (GSO)	31
Landmark Aviation	Ocala	Ocala International/Jim Taylor Field (OCF)	31
Marathon Jet Center	Marathon	Florida Keys Marathon (MTH)	31
Rectrix Aerodrome Centers	Hyannis	Barnstable Municipal-Boardman/Polando Field (HYA)	31
Signature Flight Support	Washington, D.C.	Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA)	31
TAC Air	Shreveport	Shreveport Regional (SHV)	31
Atlantic	Jackson	Jackson-Evers International (JAN)	30
Dassault Falcon	Wilmington	New Castle (ILG)	30
Easterwood Airport/Texas A&M	College Station	Easterwood Field (CLL)	30
Landmark Aviation	Norfolk	Norfolk International (ORF)	30
Lehigh Valley Aviation	Allentown	Lehigh Valley International (ABE)	30
San Diego Jet Center	San Diego	Brown Field Municipal (SDM)	30
Telluride Regional Airport	Telluride	Telluride Regional (TEX)	30

Source: AIN 2008 Americas FBO Survey

Compiled by Jane Campbell from data provided by Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.

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these alternatives, he explained. Fractional shares and jet cards are growing faster than traditional business aviation traffic, and SevenBar has seen continued growth in jet fuel volumes at its three facilities despite rising prices.

“Across the board, it seems that the market is solid,” Koch said. “I’m worried about the overall economy, but I’m pretty confident that the justifiable business need for business aircraft is solid.”

One of the drivers of growth is that more companies are moving away from large metropolitan areas. Instead of eliminating the need for offices, the Internet has helped companies move to lower-cost communities, and aircraft ownership enables necessary travel, Koch said. This is opening new opportunities for FBOs to develop in the so-called secondary markets. “The really interesting trend,” he said, “is going to be the VLJ market and seeing if VLJs as a class will now create new FBO

markets and awaken airports that have never before seen jet activity but have the capacity to accommodate VLJs. There are a number of airports in small- to medium-size markets or even on the edge of some major markets that will become VLJ homes and access points.”

The FBOs in these markets, however, need to prepare for these opportunities. “If all they’ve seen is avgas,” Koch said, “they

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Phoenix, Ariz. (DVT)  
Phoenix, Ariz. (PHX)  
San Antonio, Texas (SAT)

**Duncan Aviation (3)**

Battle Creek, Mich. (BTL)  
Kalamazoo, Mich. (AZO)  
Lincoln, Neb. (LNK)

**Elliott Aviation (4)**

Des Moines, Iowa (DSM)  
Minneapolis, Minn. (FCM)  
Moline, Ill. (MLI)  
Omaha, Neb. (OMA)

**Execujet Aviation (6)**

Berlin, Germany (EDDB)  
Copenhagen, Denmark (EKRK)  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates (OMDB)  
Johannesburg, South Africa (FALA)  
Sydney, Australia (YSSY)  
(joint venture with Universal UVGlobal)  
Zurich, Switzerland (LSZH)

**Flower Aviation (3)**

Garden City, Kan. (GCK)  
Pueblo, Colo. (PUB)  
Salina, Kan. (SLN)

**Galaxy Aviation (5)**

Boca Raton, Fla. (BCT)  
Orlando, Fla. (MCO)  
St. Augustine, Fla. (SGJ)  
Stuart, Fla. (SUA)  
West Palm Beach, Fla. (PBI)

**Hawker Pacific (3)**

Brisbane, Australia (YBBN)  
Cairns, Australia (YBCS)  
Sydney, Australia (YSSY)

**IAM Jet Centre (3)**

Bridgetown, Barbados (TBPB)  
St. Georges, Grenada (TGPY)  
Montego Bay, Jamaica (MKJS)

**Irving Aviation (3)**

Gander, Newfoundland (CYQX)  
Goose Bay, Newfoundland (CYJR)  
St. John, Newfoundland (CYSJ)

**Jet Aviation (14 total)**

U.S. (5):  
Bedford, Mass. (BED)  
Cahokia, Ill. (CPS)  
Dallas, Texas (DAL)  
Teterboro, N.J. (TEB)  
West Palm Beach, Fla. (PBI)

Germany (3):

Dusseldorf (EDDL)  
Hannover (EDDV)  
Kassel (EDVK)

Switzerland (2):

Geneva (LSGG)  
Zurich (LSZH)

United Arab Emirates (1):

Dubai (OMDB)

Saudi Arabia (2):

Jeddah (OEJN)  
Riyadh (OERK)

Singapore (1):

Singapore (WSSL)

**JetDirect Aircraft Services (3)**

Coatesville, Pa. (MQS)  
Dallas, Texas (DAL)  
St Louis, Mo. (SUS)

**Landmark (41, includes Encore FBO locations)**

U.S. (35):  
Addison, Texas (ADS)  
Albany, Ga. (ABY)  
Block Island, R.I. (BID)  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa (CID)  
Charlottesville, Va. (CHO)  
Cleveland, Ohio (BKL)  
Dallas, Texas (DAL)  
Dulles, Va. (IAD)  
Fayetteville, N.C. (FAY)  
Frederick, Md. (FDK)  
Greensboro, N.C. (GSO)  
Houston, Texas (IAH)  
Lakeland, Fla., (LAL)  
Laughlin, Nev. (IFP)  
Lawrenceville, Ga. (LZU)  
Leesburg, Va. (JYO)  
Lincoln, R.I. (SFZ)  
Los Angeles, Calif. (LAX)  
Middletown, R.I. (UUU)  
Norfolk, Va. (ORF)  
North Kingstown, R.I. (OQU)  
Ocala, Fla. (OCF)  
Palm Beach, Fla. (F45)

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## Las Vegas builds on Henderson's role as general aviation reliever

by Matt Thurber

Last time the NBAA Convention was held in Las Vegas—in 2004—attendees grumbled about the location of the static display at Henderson Executive Airport. There was a lot of construction under way, the airport's modern facilities were years away from being ready, and only 87 aircraft were on display when usually more than 100 are available. McCarran International Airport just didn't have the room to accommodate the static display and the atten-

dant traffic, and Las Vegas has not been on the schedule to host the event since, even as it outgrows the nation's largest convention centers.

But in 1996, Clark County purchased Henderson Executive Airport and spent more than \$30 million on a new FBO terminal, tower, ramp and taxiways. So far, 95 new hangars have been built, and more hangar developments are under way. Clark County also owns McCarran

and North Las Vegas Airport.

The development of Henderson Executive is all part of a plan by the Clark County Department of Aviation to attract general aviation traffic to reliever airports away from McCarran, according to Cecil Johnson, the county's assistant director in charge of general aviation airports. Clark County owns and operates the fuel concession at Henderson and North Las Vegas Airport.

While some companies that would like to build an FBO at a growing airport such as Henderson might complain that it isn't profitable to do so without the freedom to sell fuel, Clark County is taking its fuel pricing power to attract general aviation business. Typical government-owned fuel concessions charge normal retail fuel prices and use the money to pay for the airport and sometimes to bolster local general funds, but Clark County is using a different approach. The fuel price is much lower than McCarran and is set at the wholesale price plus labor and equipment costs. Early last month, for example, Henderson's jet-A price was \$4.88 per gallon, close to the nationwide average price, while Signature Flight Support's retail price at McCarran was listed at \$7.24 per gallon (although Signature does have a discount program).

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### Busiest FBOs

According to the ratings of FBOs submitted by AIN readers, Teterboro remains at the top of the list for New York City-area destinations, which is surprising, given the complaints about traffic at Teterboro. Nevertheless, four Teterboro FBOs received enough ratings to make the list of top-40 busiest FBOs. Those facilities were Jet Aviation (number one), Atlantic (number 10), Meridian (number 14) and First Aviation (tied for 28th). There are alternatives to Teterboro, such as Westchester County Airport in White Plains, N.Y., but only Avitat Westchester (number 18) showed up on the list.

Other FBOs on this list underscore the fact that major metropolitan airports continue to draw high amounts of business aviation traffic. Given the complaints that business aviation is clogging airline-focused airports, it's surprising to see such high numbers for airports like Miami International, Lindbergh Field, San Francisco International and McCarran International.

Skyservice Avitat in Toronto and Signature Flight Support at London Luton Airport are both back on the list of top 40 busiest FBOs as they were last year, underscoring the importance of these destinations. —M.T.



### Top 40 Busiest FBOs—Worldwide

FBO	Airport	Responses	Overall Average
Jet Aviation	Teterboro (TEB)	342	8.34
Signature Flight Support	Miami International (MIA)	244	7.13
Jimsair Aviation Services	Lindbergh Field (SAN)	237	5.57
Denver jetCenter	Centennial (APA)	211	8.46
Atlantic	Chicago Midway International (MDW)	211	7.74
Signature Flight Support	San Francisco International (SFO)	201	6.99
Atlantic	Pitkin County/Sardy Field (ASF)	201	7.58
Atlantic	McCarran International (LAS)	201	7.61
Vail Valley Jet Center	Eagle County Regional (EGE)	200	8.44
Atlantic	Teterboro (TEB)	199	7.24
Epps Aviation	DeKalb-Peachtree (PDK)	194	7.61
Scottsdale Air Center	Scottsdale Municipal (SDL)	192	8.44
Skyservice Avitat	Lester B. Pearson International (CYYZ)	183	8.38
Meridian Teterboro	Teterboro (TEB)	181	8.59
Signature Flight Support	Logan International (BOS)	180	5.99
Landmark Aviation	Los Angeles International (LAX)	176	6.62
Monterey Jet Center	Monterey Peninsula (MRY)	169	8.48
Avitat Westchester	Westchester County (HPN)	164	8.32
Landmark Aviation	Scottsdale Municipal (SDL)	162	8.07
KaiserAir Jet Center	Metropolitan Oakland International (OAK)	156	7.23
Galaxy Aviation	Palm Beach International (PBI)	154	7.85
Million Air	Addison (ADS)	151	8.68
Signature Flight Support	London Luton (EGGW)	149	7.47
Naples Airport Authority	Naples Municipal (APF)	149	6.39
Swift Aviation Services	Sky Harbor International (PHX)	148	8.42
Jet Aviation	Hanscom Field (BED)	147	7.20
Landmark Aviation	Washington Dulles International (IAD)	145	7.38
First Aviation Services	Teterboro (TEB)	142	6.37
Signature Flight Support	Palm Beach International (PBI)	142	7.29
Banyan Air Service	Fort Lauderdale Executive (FXE)	141	8.68
Jet Aviation Palm Beach	Palm Beach International (PBI)	141	8.61
Wilson Air Center	Memphis International (MEM)	137	9.03
Million Air	Bob Hope (BUR)	137	7.68
Business Jet Center	Dallas Love Field (DAL)	136	8.72
Signature Flight Support	Morristown Municipal (MMU)	134	7.51
SheltAir Aviation Services	Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood Int'l (FLL)	133	8.18
Atlantic	Norman Mineta San Jose Int'l (SJC)	132	7.62
Wilson Air Center	Douglas International (CLT)	131	8.39
Atlantic	John Wayne/Orange County (SNA)	129	7.72
Signature Flight Support	McCarran International (LAS)	129	7.43

▶ *Continued from page 24*

Raleigh, N.C. (RDU)  
Roanoke, Va. (ROA)  
Rochester, N.Y. (ROC)  
San Antonio, Texas (SAT)  
Scottsdale, Ariz. (SDL)  
Sioux Falls, S.D. (FSD)  
Springfield, Ill. (SPI)  
Syracuse, N.Y. (SYR)  
Westerly, R.I. (WST)  
White Plains, N.Y. (HPN)  
Wichita Falls, Texas (SPS)  
Winston-Salem, N.C. (INT)

**Canada (3):**  
Vancouver, British Columbia (YVR)  
Calgary, Alberta (YYC)  
Toronto, Ontario (YYZ)

**France (2):**  
Nice (LFMN)  
Paris (LFPB)

**Ireland (1):**  
Dublin (EIDW)

**Million Air (7, franchises owned by Ken Allison)**

Asheville, N.C. (AVL)  
Charleston, S.C. (CHS)  
Chicago, Ill. (MDW)  
Cincinnati, Ohio (LUK)  
Columbus, Ohio (CMH)  
Lafayette, La. (LFT)  
New Orleans, La. (NEW)

**Ross Aviation (7)**

Anchorage, Alaska (ANC)  
Broomfield, Colo. (BJC)  
Carlsbad, Calif. (CRQ) (partial ownership)  
Miami, Fla. (OPF)  
Santa Fe, N.M. (SAF) (two FBOs)  
Scottsdale, Ariz. (SDL)

**Rocky Mountain jetCenter Network (4)**

Colorado Springs, Colo. (COS)  
Denver, Colo. (APA)  
Fort Collins, Colo. (FNL)  
Salt Lake City (SLC)

**SheltAir Aviation Services (11)**

Daytona Beach, Fla. (DAB)  
Farmingdale, N.Y. (FRG)  
Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (FLL)  
Islip, N.Y. (ISP)  
Jacksonville, Fla. (JAX)  
New York, N.Y. (LGA)  
Orlando, Fla. (ORL)  
Panama City, Fla. (PFN)  
Plattsburgh, N.Y. (PBG)  
St. Petersburg, Fla. (PIE)  
Westhampton Beach, N.Y. (FOK)

**Signature Flight Support/  
BBA Aviation (115, including pending  
Hawker Beechcraft acquisitions)**

**U.S. (61):**  
Anchorage, Alaska (ANC)  
Atlanta, Ga. (FTY) (acquisition pending)  
Atlanta, Ga. (PDK)  
Austin, Texas (AUS)  
Baltimore, Md. (BWI)  
Bedford, Mass. (BED)  
Boston, Mass. (BOS)  
Chesterfield, Mo. (Executive Beechcraft) (SUS)  
Chicago, Ill. (MDW)  
Chicago, Ill. (ORD)  
Corpus Christi, Texas (CRP)  
Costa Mesa, Calif. (SNA)  
Dallas, Texas (DAL)  
Denver, Colo. (APA)  
Denver, Colo. (DEN)  
Des Moines, Iowa (DSM)  
Detroit, Mich. (DET)  
Dulles, Va. (IAD)  
Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (FLL)  
Hartford, Conn. (BDL)  
Hilton Head, Ga. (HXD)  
Houston, Texas (HOU) (acquisition pending)  
Huntsville, Ala. (HSV)  
Indianapolis, Ind. (IND)  
(acquisition pending)  
Indianapolis, Ind. (IND)  
Jacksonville, Fla. (JAX)  
Jacksonville, Fla. (VQQ)  
Kansas City, Kan. (Executive Beechcraft) (MCI)  
Kansas City, Kan. (Executive Beechcraft) (MKC)  
Kissimmee, Fla. (ISM)  
Las Vegas, Nev. (LAS)  
Long Beach, Calif. (LGB)  
Memphis, Tenn. (MEM)  
Miami, Fla., (MIA)  
Milwaukee, Wis. (MKE)  
Minneapolis, Minn. (MSP)  
Morristown, N.J. (MMU)  
Nashville, Tenn. (BNA)  
New Century, Kan. (Executive Beechcraft) (IXD)  
New Orleans, La. (MSY)  
Newark, N.J. (EWR)

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Clark County's strategy is paying off. In 2006, Henderson pumped 609,708 gallons of jet-A; that number more than doubled to 1,227,563 gallons last year. Transient traffic climbed to 8,000 in 2007, up from 3,135. "That tells us we made the right decision in tailoring Henderson Executive for handling corporate and business aviation," said Johnson.

Two private developers—Jet Source and The Ribeiro Companies—are building hangar and office space at Henderson. Tenants are now moving into Ribeiro's Henderson Quail Commercial Aviation Center, which consists of 125,000 sq ft of leasable hangar and office space. Ribeiro's second

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Orlando, Fla. (MCO)  
Palm Beach, Fla. (PBI)  
Palm Springs, Calif. (PSP)  
Rochester, Minn. (RST)  
San Antonio, Texas (SAT)  
(acquisition pending)  
San Francisco, Calif. (SFO)  
Santa Barbara, Calif. (SBA)  
Savannah, Ga. (SAV)  
St. Louis, Mo. (STL)  
St. Paul, Minn. (STP)  
St. Petersburg, Fla. (PIE)  
Tampa, Fla. (TPA)  
(acquisition pending)  
Teterboro, N.J. (TEB)  
Thermal, Calif. (TRM)  
Van Nuys, Calif. (VNY)  
(acquisition pending)  
Washington, D.C. (DCA)  
Wheeling, Ill. (PWK)  
White Plains, N.Y. (HPN)  
Wichita, Kan. (ICT)  
(acquisition pending)

*Brazil (13):*

Belém (SBBE)  
Belo Horizonte (SBBH)  
Brasília (SBBR)  
Manaus (SBEG)  
Porto Alegre (SBPA)  
Recife (SBRF)  
Rio de Janeiro (SBRJ)  
Rio de Janeiro (SBGL)  
Rio de Janeiro (SBJR)  
Salvador (SBSV)  
São Paulo (SBSP)  
São Paulo (SBGR)  
São Paulo (SBMT)

*China (1):*

Hong Kong (VHHH)

*Belgium (2):*

Brussels (EBCI)  
Liege (EBLG)

*France (2):*

Paris (LFPB)  
Toulon (LFTH)

*Greece (3):*

Athens (LGAV)  
Heraklion (LGIR)  
Thessaloniki (LGTS)

*Ireland (2):*

Dublin (EIDW)  
Shannon (EINN)

*South Africa (1):*

Cape Town (FACT)

*United Kingdom (12):*

Aberdeen (EGPD)  
Birmingham (EGBB)  
Bournemouth (EGHH)  
Cardiff (EGFF)  
Doncaster (EGCN)  
Edinburgh (EGPH)  
East Midlands (EGNX)  
Glasgow (EGPF)  
Inverness (EGPE)  
London (EGLL)  
London (EGGW)  
Southampton (EGHI)

**Stevens Aviation (3)**

Dayton, Ohio (DAY)  
Denver, Colo. (BJC)  
Greenville, S.C. (GSP)

**Tac Air (12)**

Amarillo, Texas (AMA)  
Chattanooga, Tenn. (CHA)  
Denver, Colo. (APA)  
Fort Smith, Ark. (FSM)  
Greenville, S.C. (GMU)  
Hartford, Conn. (BDL)  
Knoxville, Tenn. (TYS)  
Lexington, Ky. (LEX)  
Omaha, Neb. (OMA)  
Raleigh, N.C. (RDU)  
Shreveport, La. (SHV)  
Texarkana, Ark. (TXK)

**Universal UVGlobal**

(various locations worldwide;  
full list not available)

**Volo Aviation (5)**

Fort Pierce, Fla. (FPR)  
Hayward, Calif. (HWD)  
Houston, Texas (EFD)  
Manassas, Va. (HEF)  
Sarasota, Fla. (SRQ)

**Wilson Air Center (3)**

Charlotte, N.C. (CLT)  
Houston, Texas (HOU)  
Memphis, Tenn. (MEM)

## Rising Fuel Prices Spark Concern

In an AINonline.com poll, respondents ranked climbing fuel prices highest on their list of most significant issues, higher than charter industry scrutiny, the shortage of qualified personnel and the effect on business aviation of the current economic disquiet.

Oil futures are regularly higher than \$100 per barrel and pilots are complaining about \$7+ per-gallon jet-A prices at some busy metropolitan airports in the U.S. Average jet-A prices at the FBO pump in the U.S., according to airports information provider AirNav, were \$4.73 per gallon early last month.

Oil prices, while they have seemed high for a while, have only recently topped the inflation-adjusted record, according to a March 4 article in *The New York Times*. The previous record dates to April 1980, when a barrel of oil, adjusted for inflation, sold for \$103.76 in today's dollars. See the chart below for the inflation-adjusted dollar change in retail jet fuel prices since 1975. (Note:



these prices don't include taxes, according to the Energy Information Administration, which said that the prices are for fuel delivered to airlines and operators. Thus retail markups are likely not included.) It is interesting to note that in the 1980s, when oil prices were as high as they are today, retail jet fuel

prices (258 cents per gallon) were not far from the prices in December 2007 (\$2.70). But the chart also underscores how cheap jet fuel was for many years before climbing sharply in the past three years to "normal" inflation-adjusted levels.

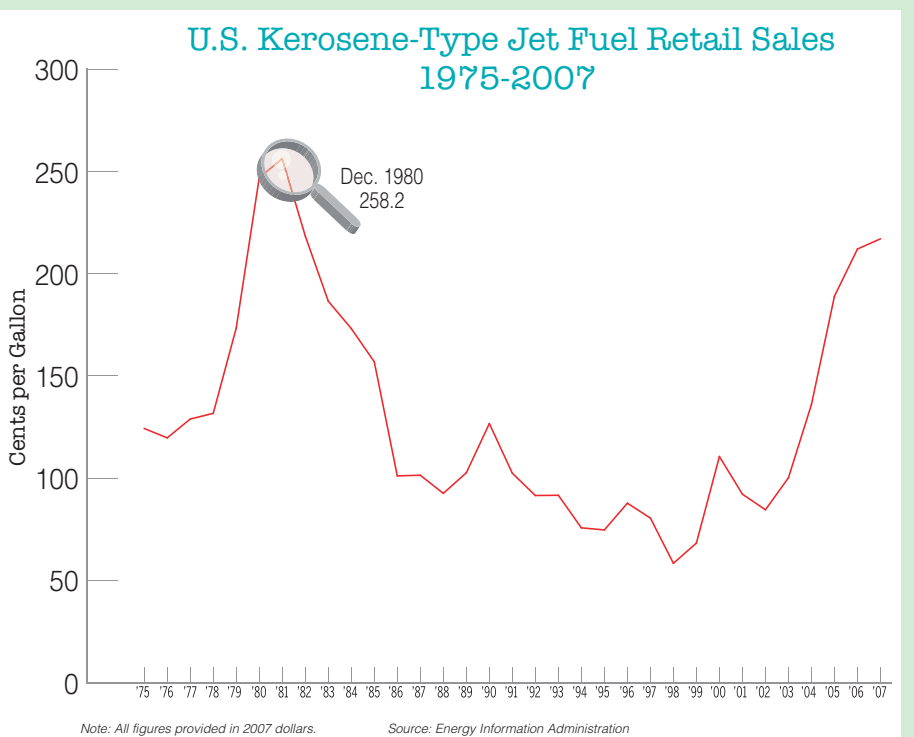
Most FBOs **AIN** interviewed have said that jet-A sales are generally strong and that they are surprised that jet owners continue to fly at fairly high rates despite the cost of fuel. Pilots, however, are ever sensitive to fuel prices and spend a lot of time figuring out ways to save money for their employers.

"I can understand every flight department wants to look at total ownership cost," said Bill Koch, president and COO of SevenBar Enterprises. Of all the expenses associated with running a business jet, he said, "the biggest one they feel they can control is fuel cost." SevenBar is a charter operator and recently sold three FBOs to Atlantic Aviation. "There is an inevitable tradeoff of fuel price and service quality and availability," he said. "But they want amenities and cheaper fuel prices."

What Koch has seen is that pilots who used to make courtesy fuel purchases are increasingly calculating whether it's less expensive to tanker lower-cost fuel and pay ramp fees or fill up at the destination FBO. "They're just trying to do what's best for their company," he said.

Corporate pilot Steve McFerrin has taken readily available data from business jet manufacturers and created online software for making tankering calculations, available free at [www.intlairportdata.com](http://www.intlairportdata.com). McFerrin's software works for the Gulfstream II through G550 and he is considering adding more jets for which data is available. The Web site also offers a test version of an Apple iPhone tankering application for the Gulfstreams, and this may be ported to other PDAs, such as BlackBerrys.

"We all know fuel isn't getting cheaper," McFerrin said. "I'm just making it easy for the average user to do quick work of what would have taken more time. I would love to add more aircraft, especially in the economy we are in. I am sure most pilots would like to have the tools to make safety-related as well as financial-related decisions while doing their flight planning. If the manufacturer of the aircraft provides tankering performance data, I can write the software." -M.T.



## What makes a good FBO?

*AIN readers who participated in the annual FBO survey submitted more comments about "what makes a good FBO" than opinions about "what makes a bad FBO." The comments range from simple declarations like "service, service, service" to kudos aimed at specific FBOs. A lot of comments gave specific advice about how FBOs should treat customers; in general they want to be greeted, passengers taken care of, then afforded a decent place to relax. And they continue to ask for reasonable ramp fees and prices.*

A good FBO is one that can anticipate customer needs and fill those needs with a cheerful attitude. Some of the best places to find this are in Toluca, Mexico."

*—Dan Valentim, chief pilot*

"In the line service category, fuel price influenced my rating at many of the FBOs, largely because I have the feeling the accountants are just maintaining the margin. Management needs to trim costs to keep price as low as possible."

*—George Archibald, pilot*

"Prompt service. Good example: Atlantic Aviation KSJC. Very consistent! I judge others by their example."

*—John White, captain*

"An FBO that doesn't just talk a good program but actually caters to the needs of the passengers and crew. An elaborate facility is not a requirement."

*—Gene Marek, captain*

"Large or small market doesn't matter. Employee attitude, ability to help passengers and crew accomplish their tasks, reasonable fees."

*—Thomas Gaydos  
director flight operations*

"Good line service and care of passengers. If the airport authority doesn't allow VIP transportation on the ramp then quick transfers to the jet are a must. Airports such as White Plains where limos are allowed on the ramp make our life a lot easier than say Lima, Peru, or Singapore, where the passengers have to go through the airline terminal."

*—Robert Scarborough, captain*

"One that does not gouge you."

*—George Pawlik, captain*

"Customer service with a smile, competitive fuel prices. Knowing the needs of each specific aircraft type. Calling in on the unicom and the line service personnel having that information and acting on it when you land."

*—David Froberg, standards captain*

"Service, service, service in all aspects for crews and passengers. Durango, Colorado, has modest physical facilities at

best, but the service and attention to crew and passenger needs are top notch."

*—Lloyd Conner, pilot*

"Line service: Adequate marshalling, swift and accurate fueling, ready response to catering needs, including ice, papers and so on. Bonus points for crew cars, workout facilities, quiet rooms."

*—David Pyshora  
captain*

"Making the effort to meet each client's individual expectations. I don't want to have to track down line crew to pull the GPU after engine start! I don't want to wait 10 to 15 minutes to process the payment during a quick-turn!"

*—John Vanosdol, pilot/safety officer*

"Make the pilot look good! Line service should park you, chock you and have a welcome mat every time. Prompt fueling.

Attentive customer service agents. Not adding 30 to 50 percent to catering bills, just for ordering. Even if they are the only FBO, not being forced to pay a ridiculous ramp fee and still charge extortionate fuel pricing."

*—Martin Humpherson, pilot*

"In Brazil, by and large, FBOs do not offer fuel because they are not allowed. I think that what [is important] is amenities, ramp space, quick services and good

quality of facilities for passengers and pilots, too."

*—Paulo Demarco, captain*

"A place that gives you and your clients the personal touch, where the people are happy to work and go the extra mile if required."

*—Johan Arijs, chief pilot*

*Report continues on next page ►*



## What makes a bad FBO?

Many survey respondents expressed strong opinions about what makes a bad FBO. More so than in the comments about good FBOs, readers name names in this category, but all in an effort to try to explain what's wrong with a particular facility. Overall, how-

ever, the bad and good comments support each other and are a valid guide to any FBO that needs to know what customers want.

"Jet Aviation at TEB has great facilities, but it lacks leadership, training and vision. I was based there and I had to pull teeth just to get the aircraft serviced. I would order services and would find out the next day nothing was done. They appear to just

throw money at the problem. Pilots dread going there because they still don't know the concept of a quick turn. If someone would look out the window and see the pile of jets trying to get out, maybe they can improve their standings. Please tell them to redesign their entrance, throw out that stupid rotating door and put an overhang so that passengers getting out of their limo won't get rained on."

—John Gregor, lead captain

"When an FBO is unable to treat the little airplane as well as it treats the big airplanes then I have second thoughts about ever going back."

—George Creager, chief pilot

"Monopolies with high fuel prices and ramp fees add up to poor service."

—Steven Taylor, pilot

"Unresponsive staff, shabby/poorly

maintained equipment, linemen/fuelers not trained or using proper safety procedures."

—Robert Parks, senior captain

"Poor attitude, city- or county-operated [FBOs] most of the time have poor service, like RME. They give you a hard time getting a GPU to heat the cold airplane. You feel like they hate their jobs, just putting time in! They only do what they have to do. No pilot Internet. If there's only one FBO on airport the facility tends to give poorer service."

—John Lepkowski, captain

"Services that do not show up in time. Staff who disappear and have to be called numerous times until they show up (UUVV)."

—B. Eberle, captain

"Price gouging. Poorly trained staff."

—John Lindholm  
aviation department manager

"Parking far away from the FBO and the FBO incorporated in the airport's main terminal. To run around to pay the landing fee at one place and the cost of handling at another place."

—Ored Goran, captain

"Charging a \$500 service fee for virtually non-existent service."

—Donald Moore  
vice president corporate aircraft

"My worst experience this past year illustrates the concept of poor value for the price of the product. We were parked on an auxiliary ramp about an eighth of a mile from the FBO and I had been informed the passengers were planning to arrive early for our departure. I needed to go into the FBO to pay for our fuel and provide crewmember escort out to the airplane. However, even after repeated phone calls to customer service, no one from the FBO came to pick me up. I waited over 20 minutes and then ended up walking in during a pouring rainstorm and getting soaked. Then we got soaked on the fuel price, paying more than \$6 per gallon. Poor service plus high prices equals poor value."

—Tom Porter, aviation director

"I can understand ramp fees; however, donating \$200 just for a drop-off really burns me up. Most professional crews try to buy token fuel, but 150 gallons as a minimum for a Beechjet is stiff. I go out of my way to let the operator know when I could have purchased more but I will try not to take on more than the minimum since obviously that is all he or she would like to sell."

—Tim Baxley, pilot

"Continually having to call on the radio or telephone to get any services while waiting on the ramp. Fuel prices and handling fees that far outweigh their values; \$850 at Signature IAD is a little excessive for just taxiing in to drop off a passenger without shutting down both engines. A general attitude of 'make them pay as much as we can soak them.'"

—Joe Hoisington, pilot

## FBOs lure pilots with amenities

The quickest way to a pilot's heart is found in the complimentary snacking areas at FBOs around the world. What started with free pilot fuel-coffee-has grown into a cornucopia of goodies and amenities to make pilots and their employers feel right at home.

The range of offerings reflects, in many cases, local flavors such as the gumbo Houma Jet in Louisiana offers customers. Drop in for a taste of the nearby tropical paradise at Jetscape in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., where Island Oasis smoothies are the favored libation. Signature Flight Support has for many years greeted visitors with freshly baked cookies, popcorn and occasional special offerings such as omelets (served on Wednesday mornings at the Baltimore base).

If your tastes favor the end of the scale

populated by cigars and adult beverages, you have to pay a visit to FalconTrust Air at Miami's Kendall-Tamiami Airport, where owner Albert Sotero has crafted an elegant FBO with a full bar, a well stocked and gorgeously appointed library and a humidor that preserves the freshness of a marvelous selection of hand-rolled cigars that will satisfy the most discriminating aficionado. If Sotero isn't busy, he'll join you on one of Falcon Trust's second-floor outdoor patios for a smoke while you grade arriving pilots' landing skills. Falcon Trust is finally getting some of the recognition it deserves (at least from **AIN** readers), having secured the fourth spot in this year's survey with an 8.79 overall average. In previous years, not enough visitors provided input for Falcon Trust to get on the final list.

### Giving Customers Exactly What They Want

Business Jet Center's original FBO at Love Field in Dallas ranked number six in this year's survey with an overall average of 8.72, and a big part of the reason, according to founding partner Mike Wright, is the amenities. Business Jet Center also owns an FBO in Oakland, Calif.

*Continues on next page ►*



Business Jet Center

## Will industry continue to embrace large chains?

John Wraga isn't so sure that the current trend of mega-sized FBO chains will continue much longer. Wraga, president and CEO of consultancy The Cambridge Group and founder of the Independent Fixed Base Operators Association (IFBOA), believes that the sheer size of large chains makes them hard to run efficiently. "They all think that bigger is better," he said. "They're buying and rehashing FBOs that have been sold many times over, which you'd think would affect the morale of employees."

Of greater concern, he said, is that high fuel prices are finally going to take their toll on business aviation, causing operators to curtail flying. While operators have kept flying and ordering new jets as fuel prices have jumped during the past few years, Wraga is hearing more operators talking about pooling resources to buy fuel at better rates and negotiating with airports to install more fuel farms. "We're seeing fuel sales starting to decrease at some airports, not just stabilizing," he said. "Some flight departments are starting to reduce hours. It's quite an expense no matter who you are. As fuel sales go down, profits are going to go down."

The smaller independent FBOs that make up IFBOA's membership have a competitive advantage, Wraga said, in that they have lower overheads and thus an easier time keeping prices low in comparison to some of the big chains, he said. "That's helped a little bit."

But independent FBOs face a disadvantage compared to the big chains, he added, because it's harder for them to spread the word about their facilities. "The biggest problem is global marketing," he said. "They all want to be known to everybody, but individual stores can't afford it."

High fuel costs are also a huge problem for independent FBOs, and Wraga is working on a program that would allow IFBOA members to buy fuel for less and offer national discounts to IFBOA member customers.

If fuel prices don't stop climbing, general aviation is going to face difficult challenges. "This is going to be a big test year for general aviation," Wraga concluded. *-M.T.*



Signature Flight Support BOS

MATT THURBER

The Dallas Business Jet Center opened in 2000, and last year Wright decided it was time to renovate the facilities. Traffic had grown substantially, with transients flying in 20 to 25 times a day, up from 10 to 15 in 2000 and fuel sales more than doubling to 5.4 million gallons a year. There

was a little wear and tear on the facilities, Wright said.

Instead of just renovating, however, Wright decided to survey customers to see exactly what they wanted in terms of amenities. "There were quite a variety of answers," he said, "and we decided there

was no way one room could address all their needs. We needed several spaces."

To accommodate the spaces, the accounting department was moved to a nearby office in another Business Jet Center hangar. This opened up room to build what Wright said are "variety areas" that are designed to meet the different needs of his customers. Employees have designated these areas the Tranquility Base, the Zero Gravity Room, the Diversion Lounge and the Flight Deck. Each one serves different customer needs. The problem that FBOs have, he added, is that sometimes one pilot will need some darkness and quiet time (if not a full snooze room) while others will want to work on computers or use brighter lighting to do some work.

To accommodate all these desires, Tranquility Base, for example, consists of two peaceful 105-gallon aquariums, two massage chairs, soft lighting and a water feature that adds gentle water sounds to the environment. There are no windows and the walls are painted in dark colors. The only lighting comes from the aquariums and small reading lights by each chair. "We use the aquariums as partitions," Wright said, "so each

chair has its own space." Architectural partitions also help split the space into private areas so people won't feel intimidated if they see someone else occupying the room as they enter.

The Zero-Gravity room features three zero-gravity chairs, which allow customers to sit with their legs elevated slightly higher than their head, a position some

### Traffic Patterns Predictable

AIN readers submitted 33,725 evaluations for this year's FBO Survey plus an additional 185 written opinions and, as is normal, the majority of those evaluations are for FBOs in the U.S. The ranking of countries doesn't change much from year to year, and Europe is clearly the geographic area with the most business-aviation activity after the U.S. Canada, South and Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico averaged nearly the same number of responses as last year and continue to see moderate levels of business aviation growth.

One encouraging sign is that evaluations for facilities in the Asia Pacific and Far East region climbed significantly this year, to 445 from 375 last year, displacing Mexico one step on the list. This substantiates the buzz about increasing traffic in the Asia Pacific and Far East region and growing business jet sales there.

Global economic growth in Asia averaged 7 percent per year from 2005 through 2007, according to figures cited by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association in its 2007 Annual Industry Review. This is more than double the 3 percent growth in Europe and the U.S. Latin America was the next highest at 5 percent, followed by Africa at 4 percent.

-M.T.

Busiest regions (according to responses)	
Country	Responses
United States	26,547
Europe	3,539
Canada	1,078
S. America, Central America, the Caribbean	981
Asia Pacific, Far East	445
Mexico	382
Middle East, Africa	294
U.S. territories	85

Source: AIN 2008 Americas FBO Survey  
Data compiled by Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.



people find relaxing. The room also has a flat-screen TV, two massage chairs and a game table for playing cards.

Not far from the Zero-Gravity room is the renovated pilot's lounge, now dubbed the Flight Deck. This is fairly traditional, with a flat-screen TV, reclining chairs, computer workstations and a closed-circuit monitor so pilots can view the FBO entry

## Camera Drawing Winners

Each January, **AIN** readers who participate in the FBO Survey qualify to enter a drawing for one of three special prizes, which this year is a Canon PowerShot SD750 Digital Elph 7.1-megapixel camera with 3X optical zoom and three-inch scratch-resistant LCD screen.

Three survey participants are randomly selected to win the camera, and this year those readers were: Lincoln Hall, aviation department manager, JJSA Aviation; Christine Floyd, flight attendant, Sentient Jet; and Steven Taylor, pilot, Graham Capital. ■



Christine Floyd



Lincoln Hall

to see their passengers arriving. The Flight Deck is adjacent to the flight-planning area, and pilots tend to use the room for shorter breaks instead of long layovers.

The Diversion Lounge is an experiment, to see what kind of light activities visitors like to do while waiting. Right now, the lounge has a Microsoft Xbox 360 video-game system and a practice putting area. "We're already talking about things we may swap out," Wright said, "and we might try some different [activities]."

After making those upgrades last summer, said Jason Pons, manager of FBO operations, the feedback from customers has been positive and, he joked, "some of them have become permanent fixtures in those rooms." They like being able to unwind and escape without having to compete with noise in typical pilots' lounges. "It's hard to de-stress in pilots' lounges," he said.

Business Jet Center's new variety rooms, said Wright, help differentiate the FBO from the competition, especially at an airport where there are seven FBOs vying for business. Facilities haven't changed much in the FBO business since the 1980s, he explained, and while the people who work there might be efficient and friendly, he wants Business Jet Center to offer customers a standout experience.

To keep the customer experience fresh, Business Jet Center offers other attractions besides the amenities. From March through November, arriving visitors are invited for a burger or hot dog fresh off the grill around lunchtime every two or three weeks. And when it's time for the annual Red River Shootout University of Oklahoma versus University of Texas football game in October, Business Jet Center rolls out the red carpet for pilots and passengers. DJ Korzyniewski, manager of concierge services, likes to make sure plenty of hot munchies are on hand, she said, "so [people] can load up a little plate when they leave." For the passengers' dogs, Korzyniewski uses her secret family recipe to whip up special airplane-shaped treats to keep available at the front counter.

"It's a fun weekend," said Wright. Employees dress in team colors and work extra hours to handle the 50 or 60 airplanes that usually fly in for the festivities. "We make it an event," he said. "It's a good team-building [exercise]. We work hard to create a healthy environment for our employees, and employees always have a smile on their face that rubs off on customers." —M.T.

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project at the airport is the Henderson Quail Air Center, where hangar/office facilities can be leased or purchased.

Jet Source plans to break ground this month for its facility at Henderson Executive. This facility will be exclusively for Jet Source's charter and maintenance customers, said Frank Milian, president and COO.

Jet Source is building two 35,000-sq-ft hangars, one for the charter and management fleet and one for the maintenance and avionics department, and the facilities are slated to open in a year.

Milian expects to base about 15 aircraft at Henderson. The benefits of operating from there instead of McCarran are savings in terms of time and cost. Instead of having to endure frequent ground delays or the 100-mile-away slowdown to get into the landing queue, he said, "you could arrive at Henderson with no delay and a 15-minute drive to the strip." Jet Source won't be able to sell fuel to transients, but Clark County will permit the company to lease a fuel truck and buy fuel from the airport fuel farm to fuel customer aircraft. —M.T.

Report continues on next page ►

## Busiest Airports

AIN readers who filled out this year's online FBO Survey questionnaire provided a glimpse into their peregrinations in the tally of responses that highlight specific airports. Once again, Teterboro is at the top of the list, proving yet again that the majority of travelers to the New York City area, no matter how much they complain about traffic delays, still prefer Teterboro to the alternatives.

Palm Beach International retains its second-place showing on this list, and Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International moved to number four from eighth place. Not all South Florida-bound travelers are sticking with the major airports, however, as Fort Lauderdale Executive moved up a few notches from last year's number 24 to tie for 16th this year with Van Nuys.

London Luton and Paris Le Bourget remain the busiest European destinations, while Canada's Lester B. Pearson International is the top non-U.S. destination in the Americas.

Chicago Executive (formerly Palwaukee) made it on the list this year in 40th place, perhaps reflecting that the name change clearly indicates its status as a Chicago-area alternative airport. —M.T.



### Top 40 Busiest Business Aviation Airports Worldwide (According to number of responses)

Airport	Responses
Teterboro (TEB)	940
Palm Beach International (PBI)	437
Centennial (APA)	390
Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International (FLL)	366
Dallas Love Field (DAL)	365
Chicago Midway International (MDW)	364
Westchester County (HPN)	362
Scottsdale Municipal (SDL)	360
DeKalb-Peachtree (PDK)	351
Hobby (HOU)	331
McCarran International (LAS)	330
Monterey Peninsula (MRY)	276
Le Bourget International (LFPB)	267
Miami International (MIA)	266
Washington Dulles International (IAD)	266
Van Nuys (VNY)	263
Fort Lauderdale Executive (FXE)	263
Sky Harbor International (PHX)	261
Lester B. Pearson International (CYYZ)	260
Metropolitan Oakland International (OAK)	245
Lindbergh Field (SAN)	237
Hanscom Field (BED)	230
London Luton (EGGW)	228
John Wayne/Orange County (SNA)	212
Boca Raton (BCT)	208
Bob Hope (BUR)	206
Eagle County Regional (EGE)	201
San Francisco International (SFO)	201
Pitkin County/Sardy Field (ASE)	201
Los Angeles International (LAX)	197
Orlando International (MCO)	194
Addison (ADS)	183
Orlando Executive (ORL)	182
Logan International (BOS)	180
Long Beach Airport Daugherty Field (LGB)	173
Boeing Field/King County International (BFI)	170
McClellan-Palomar (CRQ)	170
Memphis International (MEM)	169
Palm Springs International (PSP)	162
Chicago Executive (PWK)	160

Source: AIN 2008 Americas FBO Survey  
Data compiled by Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.

need to get prepared for a market that is sophisticated and needs special attention. These VLJ owners are going to arrive and expect nice facilities, onsite rental cars, the things you see in major markets.”

Those secondary-market FBOs will become increasingly attractive to FBO chains, Koch said, foreshadowing Atlantic Avia-

tion's purchase of the SevenBar FBOs. “The last ten years have seen tremendous amounts of consolidation,” he said, “and yet outsiders still look at this market and believe it to be fractionalized. Private equity [firms] look at the fact that there's still opportunities for more consolidation. They say this is a growth industry and they see thousands

of FBOs to be consolidated.”

Ray Meyer, Jr. is a staunch proponent of developing secondary-market FBOs, but he is concerned that airports such as Madison County Executive in Huntsville, Ala., where his Executive Flight Center is the sole FBO, are underused. “It's difficult to get the word out,” he said, “when [a traveler's] habit is to go



Henriksen Jet Center

to the big international airport.” Meyer's FBO competes with Huntsville International Airport's only FBO, a Signature Flight Support facility.

One factor that may influence pilots' choosing an airport is that Madison County, although it has a new ILS approach to its 5,000-foot runway, doesn't have a control tower. Nevertheless, Meyer and his wife, Donna, both pilots, have been able to build the business from 300 gallons a month of jet-A four years ago when they opened the FBO to about 17,000 gallons per month.

Meyer attributes Executive Flight Center's growth to reasonably priced jet fuel—\$4.75 per gallon at the end of February—available hangar space and, a key factor for secondary-market FBOs, excellent ground transport in the form of onsite rental cars. “Any small FBO needs to learn right off the bat that ground transportation is paramount,” Meyer said. At first, it was hard to convince Enterprise Rent-A-Car to provide cars that would stay at the FBO, but customers didn't want to have to wait for Enterprise to deliver a car. As traffic grew, however, Enterprise started leaving cars at Executive Flight Center, which customers appreciated.

Meyer is working on building traffic from the current 80 to 90 operations a day to the 150 necessary to justify adding a control tower. The FBO is doing well, he said, “there's been no red ink in the last two years.”

#### Enterprising FBO

Lloyd Turner, president of Enterprise Jet Center at Houston Hobby Airport, said that he gets calls every week from firms that want to buy the FBO. “It's like a feeding frenzy,” he said. Enterprise is a huge facility, with a 10,000-sq-ft canopy fronting the two-story FBO terminal and an 85,000-sq-ft clear-span hangar. The new FBO opened in



Ray Meyer, Jr.

MATT THURBER



Lloyd Turner

MATT THURBER

June 2006, although Enterprise has been operating at Hobby Airport since 1979 under various owners. Since the opening, Turner and team have raised the FBO's annual revenues to \$15 million from \$3 million.

Enterprise's hangar space is full and the FBO has land on either side on which it could build two new hangars, one 47,500 sq ft and the other 26,000 sq ft. "There's not enough hangar space on Hobby," Turner said, "and we've got a waiting list." The airport is cooperative, he added, and offers excellent lease terms so that building new hangars is worthwhile.

The FBO's designer selected attractive cherry wood accents to furnish the atrium-style lobby, and all the wood came from one tree, according to Turner. A feature unique to Enterprise is the many areas where pilots and visitors can relax; instead of just one pilots' lounge, there are many spaces where people can get away from each other after spending hours together in a cockpit. Enterprise also spent a lot on lavatory facilities, because Turner knows that this is one of the first places visitors see.

#### Build It and...

Buying and selling FBOs is almost all anyone in the FBO business can talk about these days, but Ron Henriksen chose to build an entirely new airport and his own FBO. The result is the new Houston Executive Airport, just west of Katy, Texas, and not far from the "energy corridor," where the offices of many major U.S. oil companies are located.

Henriksen was a corporate pilot for 14 years and made his fortune in the telecommunications business. According to his bio, he was sad to see the old Andrau Airpark near Houston closed and sold to land developers in 1998. "I decided that if I was ever in a position to do so, I would build an airport and put it in some kind of a trust, so it could never be closed after I am gone."

Henriksen bought a small airport (formerly 78T) and built a new 5,050-foot runway with taxiways, six acres of ramp space, a fuel farm and a growing group of T-hangars. The first big storage hangar, a 26,000-sq-ft arched-roof design that looks like a modern Quonset-style building, is finished and partially occupied. The first executive T-hangars are already full, and plans are under way to build more hangars and an FBO terminal to replace the existing temporary facilities.

Because the airport is not funded by any taxpayer money,

Henriksen can build what he needs to without a lot of government interference. The runway, for example, is long enough for most jets, but on a hot, humid Houston day, more runway is always better. So Henriksen is expanding the runway to 6,610 feet for now, then later will extend it to the final length of 7,604 feet. Long-range plans call for a parallel runway. □

"Right now it's kind of a blank canvas," said FBO general manager Scott Andre, "which is what it is." But traffic is growing, perhaps because Henriksen Center charges more than a dollar less per gallon of jet fuel than FBOs at Hobby Airport, and the west side of Houston and Katy are expanding toward Houston Executive Airport. □

