The largest gathering of aviation in the state usually goes unnoticed by many in the aviation community. With 584 Primary pilots and 88 additional pilots this year, Balloon Fiesta is no small feat. Some fun facts from this year, 995,000 cups of coffee were served this year; 12,780 donuts were consumed; and more flight worthy, 83,295 gallons of propane were used. The coordination of over 500 aircraft is a monumental task, and with urban development and sprawl it has become a large concern to the safety of flight for balloons. Land owner relations becomes a key and the interaction with public is in their front yards. It takes a true community effort to safe guard balloon flights in an urban environment like Albuquerque. While many people don’t even think that balloon pilots require a pilot certificate, or that they just go where ever the wind blows them, these misconceptions are pretty biased and can’t be further from the truth. While it is important to understand that winds aloft are the way that balloons get places, many pilots demonstrate the excellent understanding of weather. Using those winds to maneuver an aircraft that stands the height of a three story building to a target that is over a mile away with accuracy and precision. This well calculated dance shows that the team effort in lighter than air is more involved than just pulling an airplane out of a hangar. To pull off over 500 aircraft in the same airspace and landing throughout a community comes with many guidelines and an operations manual that is 48 pages long. Teams of safety officials, launch directors, balloon operations specialist and the individual pilots themselves make up an interwoven net that ensures a culture of safety. While all these considerations come into play, there is still those that look at normal balloon operations as emergencies. Landing in a field, or a street is normal practice, yet it is not normal outside of Albuquerque for the general public to see. High wind landings are usually described as crashes by someone not familiar in Lighter than Air, but are actually a practical test standard that needs to be mastered. While Balloons may be the oldest form of manned flight and the concept is pretty simple, in practice, it can be some of the most demanding flying there is. I have never had a runway move on final approach when flying airplanes, but I have had the winds shift at the last second on final in a balloon. This truly makes balloon flying a skill that demands 360-degree situational awareness, an in depth understanding of weather in all areas, not just at aerodromes, and a team effort. When these things are combined, we in New Mexico, get to witness one of the most beautiful sights in the world. “...you have flown so high and so well, that God has joined you in your laughter and set you gently back into the loving arms of mother earth and your crew.”
In Lordsburg, New Mexico on September 24, 1927 Charles Lindberg flew The Spirit of St. Louis and landed in a dirt sage brush field near the small New Mexico Village. He landed alone. But hundreds of Lordsburg citizens were waiting for the airplane and the residents had built a platform from which the pilot, Charles Lindbergh, was to address the crowd.

Charles only stayed 30 minutes on the ground. In that short time, he inspired hundreds of persons who were in awe and asking questions: How does the airplane stay up? How fast does it go? Can I get in it? Could I fly the airplane? He landed in Lordsburg as one of his over ninety (90) stops around the United States in celebration of aviation. He took flying to the people all over the United States of America. He landed in Lordsburg because it was known as the “Air Capital of New Mexico.”

Charles Lindbergh knew what he was doing—he took flying to the people! And they came in droves to see the phenomenon. It is time to bring flying back to the people and to take it back into their towns, their airports, to their minds and their hearts. The Aviation Division was created in 1963 by the legislature and the opening lines of that law direct this division “to encourage and advance aviation” in New Mexico. There are over fifty (yes, over 50) public paved airports in New Mexico available to the public to enjoy; they are accessible to every City, Village, Town and County in this great State. This is not including Albuquerque International. The airports are in good condition, sitting there serenely in all corners of the State just waiting ... just waiting for a pilot to land.

It is the legal and new directive and direction of the Aviation Division to connect the public, the towns and counties and other travelers to these paved airports to enhance the usefulness of these fine airports as a boost to their towns, cities, counties and, most importantly, to add a new phase and dimension to persons’ lives within their own communities.

We still have the wonderment and curiosity of the humans of Lordsburg, New Mexico in 1927—we just have to see our own areas from above and to experience the exhilaration of controlling a machine that glides and soars like an eagle and yes, that can circle the mountain tops, peer into the valleys, and lets us take photographs of our own homes and places and even to travel much faster than a car, and in a straight line.

People often ask: “Is flying for me?” “Can I do it?” “Where can I do it?” “How long does it take?” “Is it expensive?” The answer to the first two questions is that flying is for everyone that wishes to do it. The answers to the other questions will be answered by calling your local airport or the Aviation Division of the Department of Transportation of New Mexico at 505-629-5105. This continuing article will spell out programs that will be initiated by the Aviation Division. The first of four programs is the “passport” program that gives recognition to existing pilots for landing at paved airports in parts of New Mexico and incudes out of state pilots. This program is expected to be underway within short time. The other three programs are intended to get persons inspired to be a pilot, be connected with flying and to go for their pilot’s license. We are TAKING FLYING TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW MEXICO! Keep reading and keep your eyes open and, most importantly, ask.

Pedro G. Rael, Director of the Aviation Division of the N.M. Department of Transportation
Aviation Projects
by Dan Moran

NMDOT’s Aviation Division works closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure airports in New Mexico continue to provide a safe and efficient infrastructure. This year airports in New Mexico received approximately $9,441,450.00. Some of the notable projects funded this year are:

- **Clovis Municipal Airport: Reconstruct Rwy 12-30, Twy A & Apron Improvements**
  - A $927,105.00 pavement overlay at Clovis Municipal Airport was the notable project this year.
- **Moriarty Municipal Airport: Rwy 17-35 & Twy E Pavement Overlay**
  - This project, with a cost of $1,087,200.00, includes the pavement overlay for runway 17-35.
- **Santa Fe Municipal Airport: Rwy 10-28 Rehabilitation And Rwy 15-33 Pavement Maintenance**
  - This project will significantly increase for general aviation users. This airport provides general aviation users with a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) rating of 16 out of 100, meaning that it is very close to total failure.

When this runway was originally constructed in 2012 there was insufficient funding to construct the pavement thickness to the critical aircraft design. This project will bring the thickness up to meet the current demands of the airport. The runway designation is also being changed from 18-36 to 17-35.

NMDOT Aviation Takes Part in NMAA STEM Expo

Former State Aviation Division Employee Wayne York Last Flight

**Colonel Wayne P. York, Ret.,** made his last flight on Friday, May 24, 2019 in Albuquerque, NM. Wayne passed away peacefully with his family by his side. Wayne, the son of the late Kenneth C. York of Westbrook, ME and Barbara Yorl Manos of Spring Hill, FL, was born in Lynn, MA on May 5, 1940. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Charlene (Zeitman) York and daughter Jodi E. York and granddaughter Eryn K. Ortiz of Dublin, OH; sisters-in-law, Roberta and Marjorie Zeitman; and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Wayne completed his Aviation training at Laughlin A.F.B., Texas in 1966. He also earned his master’s degree from American Technological University in 1973. Wayne also completed Squadron Officer’s School and Air Command and Staff College while in the Air Force.

Wayne loved to fly and in his role with the Division, he worked tirelessly to pass on his passion to future generations. Wayne was fortunate to have two careers doing what he loved, flying. After retiring from the state, Wayne volunteered for Meals on Wheels, Albuquerque Senior Centers, and was a Special Olympics coach.
A Whole New Airport
Click on photo for more information

Aviation Division
nmaviation.org
505-795-1401