

Aviation Quarterly Newsletter

brought to you by the New Mexico Department of Transportation

FLY NEW MEXICO

Flying amid COVID-19

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Balloon Fiesta Postponed

Let the Games Resume

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Pandemic & General Aviation

Story by William Fitzpatrick

There are about five hundred airports in the United States that are commercial use, but over five thousand airports open to the general public. This gives an individual ten times the amount of choices to fly into if using general aviation in comparison to commercial aviation. Anything from a business trip to a vacation, you are probably likely to find an airport closer to the destination you actually want to get to.



Global pandemic, economic downturn, airlines parking their jets in droves, this is the reality that has become 2020. What was a pilot crisis five months ago has flipped into another pilot crisis with the airlines slashing routes and parking assets. While many people do not want to be stuck in an airplane with over a hundred other passengers, what could solve this issue while still having air travel. Post war America had a thought that air travel would revolutionize how we traveled from point to point. They were correct, but not the way many envisioned. What was originally seen as a new way of personal travel with privately owned travel instead gave

way to the large busses in the sky that we know as airlines. Now in this changing environment and uncertainty it might be time to look at the original premise of personal aircraft for travel, instead of getting on a commercial airline. Many in the general aviation community understand the versatility and the convenience of flying general aviation opposed to flying on commercial airlines. You do not have to deal with the stress of getting to an airport, checking bags, going through TSA checkpoints and dealing with the massive crowds that are found at the commercial airports. Instead going to the ramp of your general aviation airport, pulling your own personal vehicle up to the airplane and loading your baggage directly into the aircraft from your trunk. When you are

in charge of the flight, it gives you the ability to deviate on your destination, schedule, and lets you have the flexibility of real life.

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Times have also changed from when general aviation boomed in the United States to now. While it has become more affordable to fly on commercial aviation over the years, the models of how we go about transporting ourselves

have changed. While there are arguments if millennials own less cars than their predecessors, somethings are clear. Congestion on our highways are greater, and more people are using ride share or alternative modes of transportation in their day to day life. The thought of the traditional taxi has been almost completely supplanted by Lyft or Uber. These models at the moment are not compatible with aviation in many ways because the FAA has deemed that they are, "holding out." Or 14 CFR 119 and the grey line that separates operations that do or do not require an operating certificate. At what point are you holding out your services to the public and when do you cross the line from private carriage into common carriage. Welcome to the great debate that has raged

for the better part of a decade, and those who want to emulate the Uber/Lyft model into general aviation. This very premise has created headaches from many people trying to, "modernize," the general aviation community to reflect what has been happening in ground transportation. The idea is fascinating, and could be very promising, but there would need to be some hard looks at both the FARs and what the intent is. Aviation as we all know is an incredibly regulated practice, and changes are slow for the most part. The overarching aspect is changes will be to enhance safety. While safety is paramount, the dynamics of the industry and society have also substantially changed. These are the conversations our communities should be having.

So regardless (or irregardless

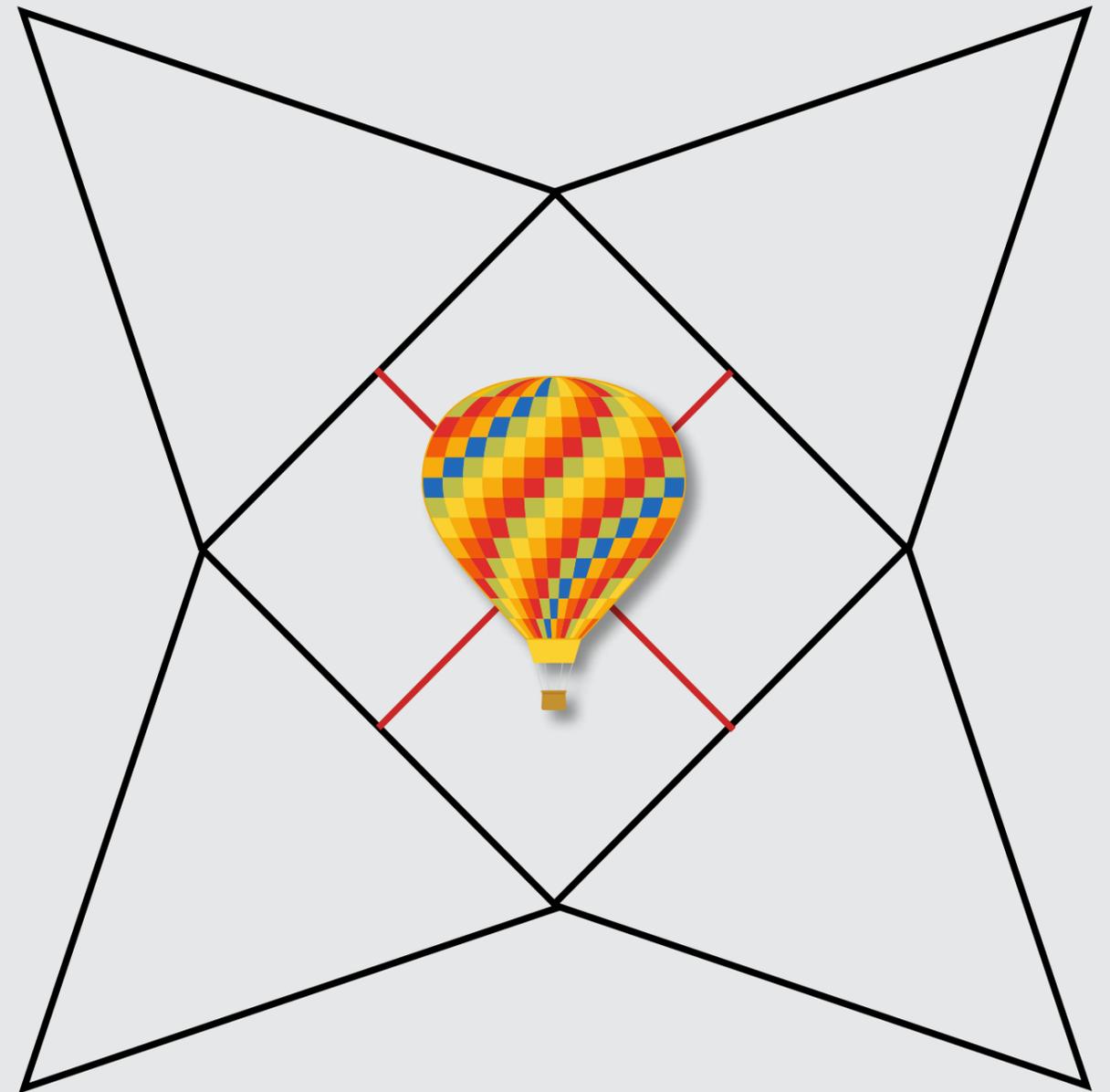
according to websters,) of ride sharing concepts, commercial airline down turns, and the still overcast of a global pandemic, it might be time for the public to look back to the 1950s dreams of personal air travel. The benefits in many ways now start to outweigh the drawbacks. Smaller groups of people, flying privately owned airplanes, with greater flexibility. All while decreasing the time in travel and avoiding the congestion. After landing at an airport and putting the airplane away, I now dread getting in the car and dealing with the crowded roads, and instead wish I could somehow just land in front of my house. That short car drive is a small price I will pay so I can instead get in the air and open up the road of possibilities. <





The Purpose

X and triangles set up in locations for balloons to fly into. Each balloon had to launch from a point of their choosing at least 1000 meters away from the targets, and then fly their balloons into the field to attain a score by throwing a marker on targets in a certain order or at a certain time period.



Let the Games Resume

Story by Will Fitzpatrick



Mark Sullivan, the President of the CIA Bureau of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, confirmed that Top Gun Ballooning Inc, New Mexico's Hot Air Competition Club was the first to hold an aviation sporting event in the World. Twenty-three competitive pilots flew a two-day event over Father's Day weekend. With the issues of social distancing and COVID-19, pilot briefings were conducted virtually so no large gatherings were held.

The baggies (Markers) and the GPS loggers for each compet-

itor were picked up in a drive through style the day prior to competition. Targets opened at 6:15 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday, with an X and triangles set up in locations for balloons to fly into. Each balloon had to launch from a point of their choosing at least 1000 meters away from the targets, and then fly their balloons into the field to attain a score by throwing a marker on targets in a certain order or at a certain time period. With it being the first Aviation Sport event to be held in the world, members of Top Gun worked hand

in hand with the Albuquerque Flight Standards District Office in Albuquerque. The help of the Albuquerque FSDO and precautions from the Top Gun Board of Directors created an impressive new way to conduct business, ensure safety, and get New Mexico back flying. New Mexico, traditionally has led many aspects in the Hot Air Balloon community, but have shown even with unprecedented closings of Aviation Events around the World, New Mexico Hot Air Balloon Competitions will still lead the world.<



Hangar Space

Story by Tony Gilbert

The New Mexico Department of Transportation's Aviation Division (NMDO-TAD) has one main directive: to promote aviation in the State of New Mexico. Since the founding in 1963, the different iterations of the Aviation Division has done its best to ensure that tax money gathers by the State of New Mexico has gone to fund projects at public-use airports through grants. However, it is only in recent months that NMDOTAD has decided to focus more on the promotion of aviation through other means. Part of fulfilling our directive

to promote aviation, we need to honestly assess the conditions, as we best understand them state-wide, to know what avenues are available to promote aviation. There is one issue that we do need to work on when it comes to the promotion of aviation, and that is working with pilots to assess their needs and accessibility at New Mexico's airports. Accessibility can be broken into several kinds of measures, including fuel farms, 24-hour restroom access, pilot lounges, and access to and from the airport via roads that connect the airport to the town. Yet, with all of those, there

is still one major aspect that hasn't been touched that deserves significant consideration in our eyes: General Aviation Hangar Space. In recent years, NMDOTAD has heard repeatedly that many airports with public hangars have been at capacity and with waitlists. We have even heard that several pilots are taking their planes out-of-state to store them, and that is a blind spot on our part. With this information, NMDOTAD has decided that we would like to participate in constructing hangars at public airports across the state. Due to COVID-19 and the challenges it has brought to our

country, please note that the hangar projects that NMDO-TAD can fund will be limited in both cost and scope. For the first two years, we would like to limit the type of hangars requested to T-Hangars. Hopefully, after a few years of hangar development statewide, we can see some gains at airports and be able to continue hangar development projects into the future.

For Pilots:

Talk with your airport managers about hangar projects and see if they would be interested in participating in a State grant.

For Airport Sponsors:

For those Sponsors with airports that are interested in participating in our t-hangar program, you will need to provide the following:

A hangar waitlist:

Physical space available at your airport for the development of new hangars.

New Hangar Development Area marked out on your Airport Layout Plan (ALP)

Request a justifiable number of hangars

Provide at least a 10 percent match for any hangar project

Airports with a suitable surface for constructing hangars

upon will receive additional priority if all other conditions are met. Also, Sponsors that are able to contribute more funding than a minimum 10 percent will also be prioritized.

Those Sponsors that are interested in this program, if you have not already, please submit your current waitlist to Tony Gilbert at anthony.gilbert@state.nm.us. The waitlist must include the type of aircraft, the individual or business's name, the individual or business's contact information, and approximate wait time on the waitlist. <



Balloon Fiesta Postponed

Story and photo by William Fitzpatrick

2020 seems to be canceled, but it would be inappropriate to say that the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta has been canceled. Balloon Fiesta is run by a board of directors and is a non-profit organization.



For the everyday person, you will say, like most things in this COVID world, it has been canceled. 2020 seems to be canceled, but it would be inappropriate to say that the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta has been canceled. Balloon Fiesta is run by a board of directors and is a non-profit organization. “The first gathering of 13 balloons in 1972 was held in the parking lot of Coronado Center Mall in Albuquerque. The following year, 13 countries took part in the “First World Hot Air Balloon Championship”, the world’s largest ballooning event, held at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds. By 1978 Albuquerque was playing host to 273 entries. The number of balloons steadily increased, with 600 in 1988 and 903 balloons in 1999. The organizers of the Balloon Fiesta registered more than 1000 balloons in the year 2000. Due to shrinking landing site availability, the number of hot air balloons is now limited.” According to AIBF’s website, it shows that Balloon Fiesta has always been a grassroots balloonist affair. To this day it still is run by the balloon community, and is not put on by a municipality

or the state. According to KOB, “The cancellation is expected to leave a \$180 million hole in the local economy.” This shows the importance of an aviation event to our state. So what gives? Why is it postponed and not canceled? What is the difference, we won’t be seeing Fiesta in 2020. The bigger reason that it is a postponement is the logistics that goes into the Fiesta. What many people don’t see is the planning and the expenditures that go into putting on the world’s largest balloon event. This starts the day after Fiesta ends. There is no prohibition of balloons flying, so far, in October, but the event as we know will not happen until 2020. Pilots that were registered for 2020 are now accepted for 2021, since this event has not been canceled. That is probably one of the largest take away from this postponement is that they literally have shifted all the logistics and planning out a year. My hat is off to the Fiesta Board for making such a tough decision, but in all actuality, they probably saved the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta from bankruptcy and we will continue to have Fiesta in the future. Here is to AIBF 49, 2021. ◀



From the Director's Corner: COVID-19 and Progress

Closer to aviation, there has been a severe impact on air passenger travel as we know it—major airlines carrying millions of people from place to place. One question dear to general aviation and small air services—will this impact on major airlines have a noticeable effect on general aviation and the smaller carriers?



COVID-19 has caused some changes to the Aviation Division for NMDOT. The entire staff

has been primarily teleworking. A small part of the staff time is spent at the office because some things simply cannot be done on a computer.

Interesting observations—in discussions with NMDOT staff and Aviation Division staff, it appears that there has been an increase in efficiency in some of the tasks of NMDOT overall and of the Division. As a result of teleworking. There has been a decrease in efficiency in some other tasks that cannot be done by teleworking. On the national front, there is discussion that permanent work-related changes are expected to

occur because so much teleworking is being done by advances in technology and pushed further and faster by Covid 19.

Closer to aviation, there has been a severe impact on air passenger travel as we know it—major airlines carrying millions of people from place to place. One question dear to general aviation and small air services—will this impact on major airlines have a noticeable effect on general aviation and the smaller carriers? Will there be a long-term impact on how people travel by air? Will there be some significant shift to travel by Cessna 182, for example? Will the pilot population increase in general aviation and the small, individual carriers? Will the Federal Aviation Administra-

tion adopt special rules for these purposes? Does the public need to be educated regarding smaller airplane travel?

Many questions to ponder and any information you may have is welcome. Send your ideas or comments via email to pedro.rael@state.nm.us or to william.fitzpatrick@state.nm.us or to joseph.valdez@state.nm.us or to anthony.gilbert@state.nm.us. Wherever you send it, please furnish me with a copy.

And remember—**PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE** is growing and we want more participants. Attached is an application form! Fill it and return it to me or [anthony.gilbert](mailto:anthony.gilbert@state.nm.us) for a gratis passport booklet and enjoy New Mexico! Pedro, Director of Aviation. <