

Airport to start director search after runway improvements

Upgrades expected to be complete next year

STEVEN GAMBLE
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Texarkana Regional Airport will begin the search for its next permanent director once it nears the completion of a large construction project.

Russell Henderson has served as interim director since April, when Paul Mehrlisch resigned to become chief executive director Gainesville Regional Airport in Gainesville, Florida.

“Given the complexity and significance of the airport’s ongoing runway modernization project, the Authority believes it is in the best interest

of both the organization and its future executive director to maintain continuity during construction,” David Potter, Airport Authority Board chairman, said in an email to the Gazette.

The project will upgrade airport infrastructure for the large-body planes, such as the Boeing 777, expected to land here for servicing at the planned maintenance, repair and overhaul facility.

Phase 1 of the project began July 20. It includes a 500-foot extension on the main 4-22 runway and a 6-inch asphalt overlay. The longer, stronger runway is needed for heavier planes.

Phase 2 is preparation of the MRO site. Dean Baldwin Painting is expected to be the first tenant.

Phase 3 of the project will widen taxiways Bravo and Delta, extend taxiway Delta and convert runway 13/31 into a taxiway for the MRO site.

Tatum Excavating Co. was contracted to perform the upgrades, which should be complete some time in 2027.

“Collectively, these three phases represent more than \$63 million in public infrastructure improvements and will help position Texarkana Regional Airport for continued growth, expanded aviation services and future economic development,” Potter said.

The airport estimates Dean Baldwin could bring up to 160 jobs, \$10 million in payroll and approximately \$14 million in overall local economy impact.

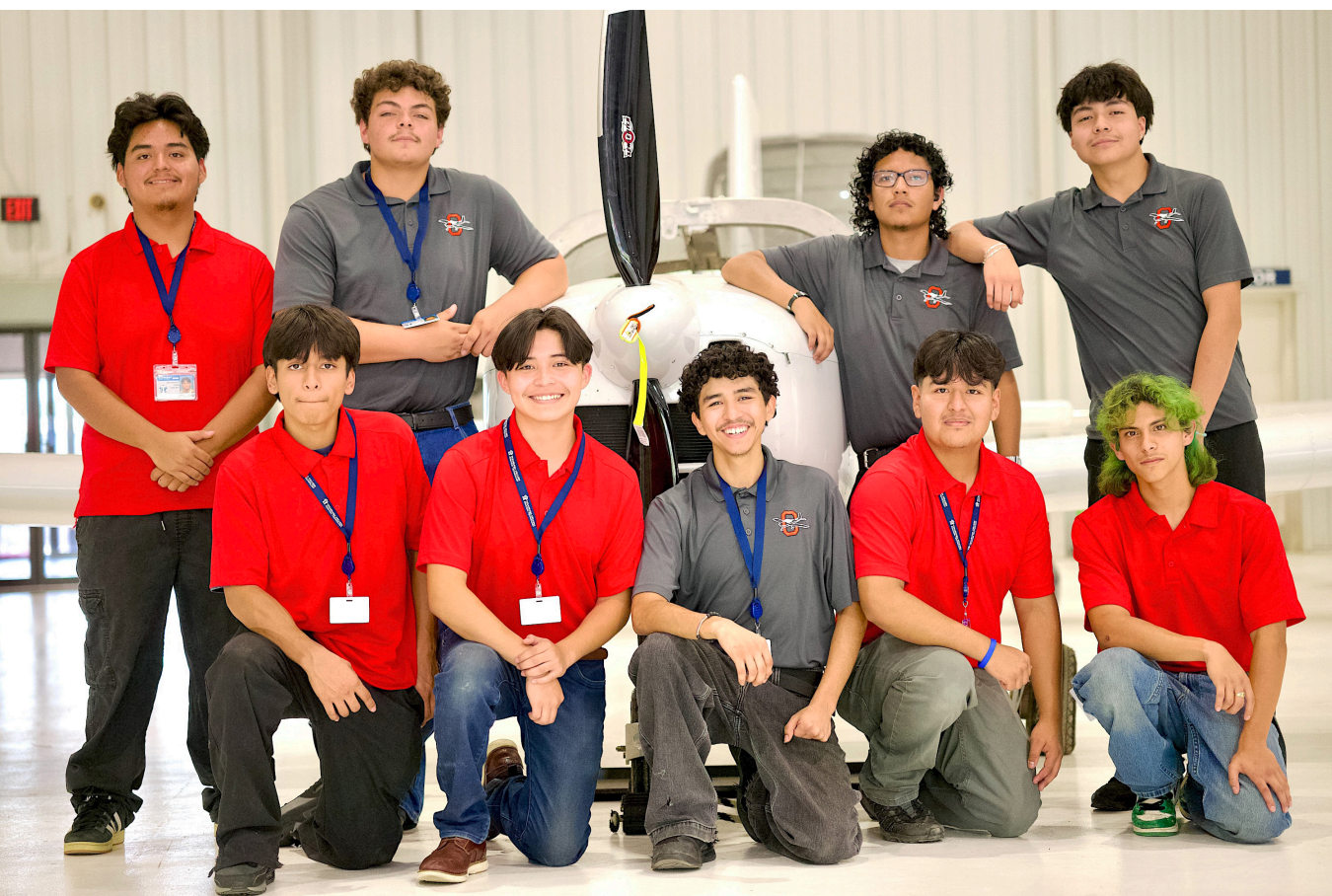
Henderson, a Texarkana native, has more than four decades of aviation experience, beginning with the Air Force in 1986. He joined Texarkana Regional Airport in January 2009 and has served as operations director, deputy director and airport security coordinator.

“Throughout his tenure, Henderson has repeatedly stepped into multiple leadership roles simultaneously when the needs of the airport required it,” Potter said.



Russell Henderson, operations manager at Texarkana Regional Airport, presents a report March 27, 2025, during an Airport Authority Board meeting. Henderson has served as interim airport director since April. (Staff file photo by Stevon Gamble)

Teen aviation students’ struggles mobilize community



Texarkana College aviation students, standing from left, Alex Salvador, Joshua Orellana, Kevin Velasquez and Jesus Sierra; and, kneeling from left, Jason Leyva, Josue Cardenas, Geovany Torres, Brandon Coronado and Alex Ruiz pose for a photo Thursday inside the Texarkana College Aviation Technology hangar at Texarkana Regional Airport. The group, along with Ivan Sanchez, are from Cleveland, Texas, and have a received an outpour of support from the Texarkana community after a Facebook post detailing some of their struggles. (Staff photo by Stevon Gamble)

STEVEN GAMBLE
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA — A Facebook post has created an outpouring of support for 10 South Texas high school graduates completing their aviation education at Texarkana College.

On Aug. 14, aviation director Tyler Poole took to social media to relate the group’s plight.

“Two missing lug nuts, a blown fuel pump, who knows what else ... but it got them to Texarkana,” Poole wrote to comment on a photo he posted of a quad-cab pickup resting on a jack and tire in the TC Aviation Technology parking lot at Texarkana Regional Airport.

The truck is one vehicle used by Josue Cardenas, Brandon Coronado, Jason Leyva, Joshua Orellana, Alex Ruiz, Alex Salvador, Ivan Sanchez, Jesus Sierra, Geovany Torres and Kevin Velasquez. The group graduated in the spring from Cleveland High School, which is about 45 miles north of Houston, and arrived in Texarkana a few weeks to attend TC’s aircraft mechanics school.

At Cleveland, the group participated in the dual cred-

it TANGO Flight program, through which students build an FAA-certified airplane.

Texarkana College has an agreement with Cleveland Independent School District that grants admission to the district’s TANGO students.

Seizing on the opportunity for a college education, the friends joined forces to travel to Texarkana together. They also joined financial resources, pooling their money to rent three apartments and share living expenses.

The move was probably the easiest part.

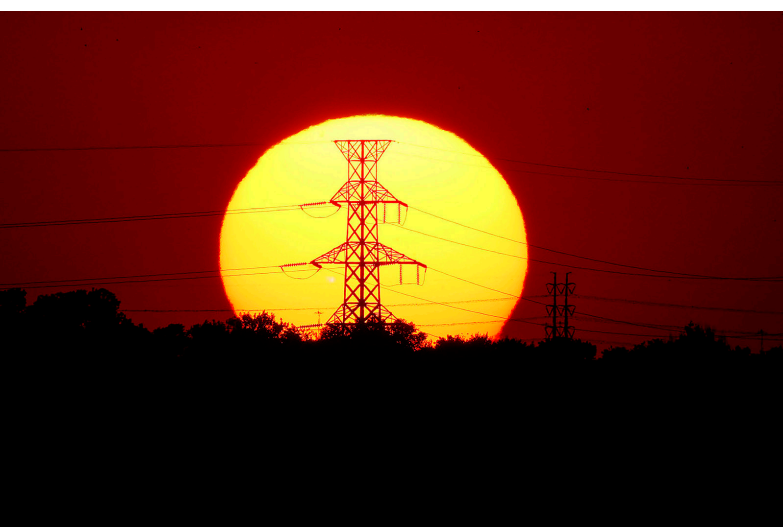
Out of the six vehicles the friends used to get to Texarkana, only two are reliable now. The friends also have faced challenges in securing work, leading them to ration meals on occasion.

“I had a biscuit for breakfast. I wanted two, but I thought it was smart to save one for tomorrow,” Poole wrote about a conversation with one of the young men.

Poole saw social media as a way to garner support for the group — and the plan worked. The Aug. 14 post had gained nearly 600 likes and 51 shares by Thursday afternoon. Among the 72 com-

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Texas investor-owned utilities cut power at 3 times the rate of co-ops and public utilities



The sun sets behind power lines near Mountain Creek Lake as a plane taking off from DFW Airport is seen in the background on July 11, 2022, in Dallas. (Smiley N. Pool/Dallas Morning News/TNS)

WILLIAM TONG
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Texas ranked second in the country for electricity disconnection rates in 2024, with about 23% of residential customers cut off from power due to billing and nonpayment issues throughout the year, according to data from the Energy Information Administration. Only Oklahoma had a higher rate.

But disconnection rates vary widely by what kind of electrical utility families use, a Dallas Morning News analysis of EIA data found. In Texas, investor-owned utilities disconnected about a third of customers due to nonpayment throughout 2024 — triple the rate of municipally owned and cooperative utilities.

About 85% of Texans have the ability to choose a for-profit retail

electricity provider because the energy market was deregulated in 2002. The utility responsible for transmission and distribution of their energy depends on where they live.

Some Texans, like those who live in San Antonio and Austin, are required to buy power from a city-owned utility, while others use an electrical cooperative. Both of these types of utilities opted out of the deregulated market, generally managing their own infrastructure.

The difference in disconnection rates between types of utilities may reflect differences in the utility’s business strategies, experts told the News. Investor-owned companies may optimize for profits, disadvantage lower-income customers, while municipal-owned and co-op utilities’ focus on customers can offer flexibility to a wider base of

households, said Margo Weisz, executive director of the Texas Energy Poverty Research Institute.

Read more:Electricity spending and energy insecurity have surged in North Texas

Prioritizing profit can disadvantage low-income customers

Investor-owned utilities prioritize making money for shareholders, Weisz said. Electricity transmission and distribution companies including Oncor and CenterPoint fall in this category. They serve the majority of Texas residential customers, though they are not responsible for charging customers directly. Retail service providers that residents pay directly such as TXU or Reliant are also investor-owned and generally issue orders for power to be disconnected.

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Walmart is cautious with expectations after slowest sales growth in 6 years

ANNE D’INNOCENZIO
AP BUSINESS WRITER

NEW YORK — Walmart reported its slowest growth in U.S. comparable sales in six years during its most recent quarter, and the retailer’s guidance for the rest of the year was seen as cautious by Wall Street.

Walmart’s second quarter fanned anxiety about the financial well-being of low-income shoppers who are spending cautiously as prices rise at the gas pump and

everywhere else.

Company shares tumbled more than 8% Thursday and helped drag the U.S. stock market lower as well.

Walmart’s comparable sales in the U.S., which measure sales at stores open at least a year along with online sales tied to those locations, rose 2.6% in the second quarter. That is down from 4.1% in the first quarter.

Excluding the wellness category that includes Walmart’s pharmacies, comparable sales increased

3.4% in the second quarter. Sales were hit by federal legislation that requires pharmacies to dispense some high-cost Medicare drugs at capped prices, the retailer said. That was still below Wall Street projections of a 3.8% increase, according to FactSet.

Still, Walmart’s quarterly profit, boosted by a \$2.9 billion tariff refund, topped expectations, and so did revenue. Walmart says it continues to take market share.

Walmart is using the U.S. tariff

refunds to temporarily lower prices on 11,000 items, it said Thursday, particularly on groceries and general merchandise.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled this year that President Donald Trump overstepped his authority when he imposed double-digit import taxes, meaning U.S. companies were owed refunds from the government.

Yet Walmart is trying to contain prices as it is squeezed by the same

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The Walmart logo is displayed on a store Aug. 14, 2025, in Manchester, N.H. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File)