

Chapter 1 – Introduction



Introduction and Purpose

The Airport Master Planning process evaluates an airport's physical facilities, establishes a forecast for future demand, and identifies a development plan to accommodate future growth. Since the aviation industry is not static, periodic updates are needed to revise an airport's master plan to account for local, regional, and national changes. Abilene Regional Airport (ABI) and the aviation industry have had some significant changes since the previous ABI Master Plan was completed in 2003. These changes include airline consolidations/mergers, local and regional socioeconomic changes, changes in security regulations, and improvements to ABI's current airport infrastructure.

This master plan will focus on examining existing facilities, forecasting future aviation demand, identifying the changes necessary to meet that demand, and establishing an infrastructure development plan for the next 20 years. Additionally, this master plan will serve as a tool for ABI's staff in their day-to-day management and a decision-making regarding ABI's upkeep and future development.

Public Involvement

An important element in any master planning process is public involvement and feedback. Airports are public assets that play a vital role in the economic development of their community and in meeting the transportation needs of community members. Consequently, public feedback throughout the master planning process is essential to ensuring that the master plan accounts for the needs of the communities the airport serves.

Public engagement during the ABI Master Planning process was accomplished in a number of different ways:

- Public Open House Meetings – Three public open house meetings were held throughout the project. The first one was held at the beginning of the project to collect feedback from the community about the airport. A second open house was held to collect feedback regarding the recommended development alternative and a final open house was held after the completion of the Airport Master Plan.
- Project Website – A public project website (<https://abilene.airportplans.com/>) was developed and the web address was provided to airport stakeholders, tenants, the public, and local media outlets. Draft copies of every airport master plan chapter were posted to the website, and an opportunity was provided for interested parties to review and comment on the chapters prior to them being finalized.
- Public Survey – A public survey was executed at the beginning of the master planning project. The online survey allowed airport stakeholders and the public to provide feedback on the current operations and condition of the airport and changes they would like to see in the future.

In addition to the items discussed above, two project committees were developed with strong links to the community and airport stakeholders. These committees are discussed in the section below.

Project Committees

Two committees were established to help guide and direct the development of the ABI Airport Master Plan – the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and the Executive Committee (EC).

The project’s EC was composed of the City of Abilene’s Transportation Services Director, the Assistant City Manager responsible for ABI, and the FAA Program Manager assigned to ABI. The role of the EC was to provide overall direction for the master planning project and to provide guidance and direction to the MPSC.

The MPSC was composed of numerous airport stakeholders including airport tenants, the ABI Airport Development Board, the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA), City of Abilene Public Works, the West Central Texas Council of Governments, the Abilene Chamber of Commerce, and others. The role of the MPSC was to represent airport stakeholders, tenants, and the public throughout the airport master planning process by serving as a conduit for disseminating information about the project to those audiences and by providing feedback and recommendations on the plan as it is being developed.

The EC and MPSC met multiple times throughout the duration of the master planning process to review and provide feedback on the draft chapters of the Airport Master Plan.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

During the project kickoff meeting with the MPSC a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was conducted. The MPSC was asked a series of questions designed to

prompt a discussion regarding each area of the SWOT analysis. **Figure 1-1** shows the ideas generated by the MPSC through the SWOT analysis.

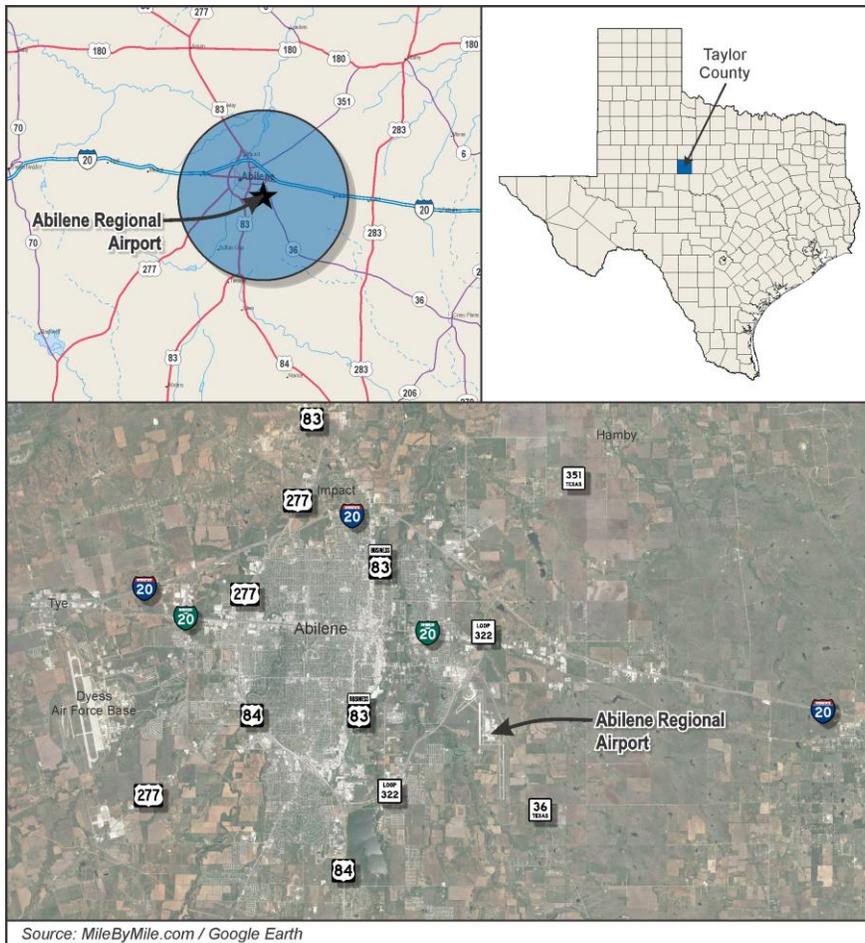
Figure 1-1
MPSC SWAT Analysis



Airport Overview, Location, and History

Abilene Regional Airport (ABI) is located 3 miles southeast of downtown Abilene. It is within the city limits of the City of Abilene and within the limits of Reeves County. The location of ABI is depicted in **Figure 1-2**. The Abilene Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has seen consistent economic growth since 2000 with the exception of 2008 and 2009 when there was a nation-wide economic recession. Currently, the largest industry sector by employment in the Abilene MSA is the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry. The largest employer in the area is Dyess Air Force Base (AFB) with approximately 5,400 employees. Hendrick Health System is the second largest employer with approximately 3,020 employees. Abilene is also home to a number of universities including Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, McMurry University, and Texas State Technical College – Abilene Campus.

Figure 1-2
ABI Location



ABI is a commercial service airport that currently has one airline (Envoy Air – dba as American Eagle) operating at the airport. ABI also has two primary general aviation developments and a major aircraft maintenance facility located on the field. According to 2010 economic impact estimates provided by the Texas Department of Transportation, ABI's total economic impact was estimated to be close to \$150 million annually and the airport was estimated to contribute over 1,400 jobs to the local economy. The main highway access route to/from ABI is via Texas Highway 36. ABI is approximately 4 miles from Interstate 20.

ABI has three runways and an excellent taxiway system that provides access to/from the aircraft parking aprons, hangars, and terminal. Runways 17R/35L and 17L/35R are the primary runways at ABI and they are the only runways available for air carrier use. Runway 4/22 is a crosswind runway that is available for general aviation aircraft operations only. The airport encompasses 1,634 acres. There are approximately 105 aircraft based at the airport, and the airport accommodates approximately 46,000 annual flight operations.

ABI first opened at its current location in November 1953. Prior to 1953, Abilene had a smaller airport called Abilene Municipal Airport that was located north of ABI's current location. When ABI first opened it had only two runways and the terminal building was located along the road currently named Navajo Circle.

Airport Ownership and Management

ABI is owned and operated by the City of Abilene. The day-to-day management and oversight of the facility is handled by the Transportation Services Division of the City of Abilene. The Abilene City Council is the body that is ultimately responsible for ABI. The City Council's responsibilities include the review and approval of all major capital programs, developments, budgets, and leases at ABI. The airport has an Airport Development Board that is appointed by the Abilene City Council. The eleven-member Airport Development Board is an advisory committee that is responsible for providing assistance, information and support to the City Council to ensure the efficient and effective operation, development, and promotion of the Abilene Regional Airport while maximizing its growth potential. All members of the Airport Development Board are appointed by the Mayor for the City of Abilene with the approval of the City Council.