

Bill Grava – A Voice of Experience from the Tower

By Laurel Lippert; Photo Tom Lippert

That voice sounds friendly enough, even when it tells you what to do. In the case of Bill Grava, air traffic controller at Truckee Tahoe Airport's tower, his voice has been heard in many places before that may surprise you.

Born in London, Ontario, Canada, Bill's family moved to Milwaukee, WI where he learned to fly, earning his private pilot certificate at age 17. Only five years later, Bill decided to pursue an aviation career and earned his instrument rating, commercial, and flight instructor certificates. He began teaching at his local flight school, managed the Beech Aero Club, earned his ATP certificate, and flew for local charter and corporate operators.

When the early 1980s recession affected job opportunities in aviation, Bill considered air traffic control and took the entrance exam. "I always liked the technology of ATC," he says. The FAA offered Bill a job as a controller, and, after three and a half months of training and graduation from the FAA Academy in 1986, Bill had a choice of three ATC facilities. He selected Sacramento Executive Airport and says, "The stability of a government job, the pay and the solid retirement guarantee attracted me, and I was still in aviation!"

After two years at Sac Exec, he moved to Phoenix to work at Phoenix Sky Harbor, a very busy airport and a new challenge. While there, Bill worked as a controller, served as a quality assurance specialist responsible for investigating controller and pilot situations, as well as a training specialist, supervisor, and air carrier briefer.

After 13 years at Sky Harbor, Bill moved back to Sacramento, working as a radar controller at NorCal Approach where he stayed until retiring from the FAA in 2011. Having maintained his flying currency, he was then hired by XOJet, a private jet charter company based at McClellan Airfield in Sacramento, and type rated in the Challenger 300. He later transferred to the six-aircraft corporate shuttle they managed, was type rated in the Embraer 145 and then became chief pilot there, overseeing 30 pilots at three different bases.

After leaving that operation, Bill learned of the need for a controller at the new KTRK tower facility and was inspired to take the job. "I enjoy camping, fishing and the many outdoor activities in the Truckee Tahoe Area," he says and shares those passions with his family.

Being a controller with pilot and instructor experience, along with aviation knowledge, has been extremely useful in



Bill Grava brings his experience to the KTRK Tower.

his career. Bill has talked several pilots through potentially serious situations, very possibly saving a few lives. One of the most memorable was a pilot flying a Cherokee who announced she had full power but could not slow the engine, and that her throttle cable had likely broken. Bill confirmed that her engine was running well and decided on a plan of action. "I'm going to have you lean the mixture, let the engine run slightly rough, but not too much. When it starts slowing down, you can begin descending over Mather Airport with a 12,000-foot runway. On short final, pull the mixture all the way off and touch down." She landed safely, while emergency trucks were standing by, but thankfully unneeded.

"One key to a being good controller is having the ability to know what to say and when not to say anything," says Bill, who would like to see the FAA put much more emphasis on educating the controller workforce in basic flying and aircraft control.

"Our primary focus here at Truckee is, of course, safety," says Bill. "Secondarily are the noise concerns. As stewards of the airport, we educate pilots who aren't up to speed on the noise issues and make sure they fly the proper procedures, arrivals and departures. Working the airspace in a mountainous terrain with the mix of traffic we have—jets, flight training aircraft, parachute jumpers, gliders, unfamiliar pilots, often firefighting activity, CHP search and rescue, and Care Flight—there's a lot going on at times. But it's a fun job, because it's a great environment working alongside a professional group of former FAA controllers, several whom I have worked with before, with over 160 years of combined air traffic experience, and a very supportive TTAD staff."

When you hear his voice, maybe saying "Hi" if he recognizes your name or N-number, imagine a big smile, easy laugh, and someone you'd like to know.

Advice to Pilots from the Truckee Tower

- Check NOTAMs, listen to AWOS, be familiar with frequencies and the airport layout.
- Don't wait to call Tower at the boundary of Class D airspace, do it 10 miles out.
- Keep your transmissions short and to the point.
- Help out the controller by saying you have the "one-minute weather," inbound or outbound, when making your request.

Truckee Tahoe Airport

PILOT NEWS

CONNECTED BY MORE THAN A RUNWAY



FALL 2018

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KTRK to Benefit from FAA Granted AIP Funds

Management at KTRK regularly submits Airport Improvement Project (AIP) grant applications to the FAA. The grants, if awarded help pay for all or part of eligible AIP maintenance and improvement projects. For 2018 KTRK was awarded, just over \$1.9M (AIP NO. 3-06-0262-2018) for multiple taxiway and taxilane rehabilitation projects. These projects are an important part of the District's comprehensive Pavement Management Plan adopted in 2014. This plan will be updated in 2019. The District has been successful over the past number of years securing annual FAA AIP grants to assist the District in maintaining this important infrastructure. Details of the 2018 projects are discussed below. The Taxiway Romeo project originally scheduled for 2018 will now take place late spring 2019.

Fall 2018: Taxilanes Joint and Crack Seal Repairs

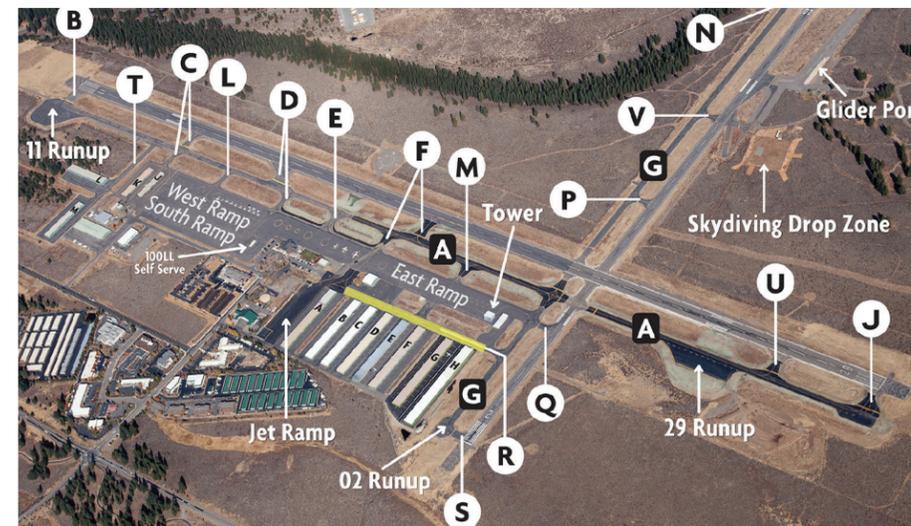
Joint and crack seal repairs will be done at hangar taxilanes A through C, at taxilane T, hangar taxilanes L and M and at the warehouse area parking lot. Q & D Construction has been awarded the bid contract. Work is tentatively scheduled for completion during the month of October. Airport staff will keep hangar tenants updated as specific start days are confirmed. Impact to tenants and transient aircraft is expected to be minimal.

parallel taxiway. The work will include asphalt removal, water line replacement, grading, base and re-pavement. Meyers Earth Works was awarded the bid contract at \$1,700,000.

All tenants in hangar rows A – H will have restricted access to their hangars during the construction phase. KTRK staff will keep A – H tenants updated on specific construction dates and alternate hangar access options as the project start date nears. There are currently no temporary relocation hangars available at KTRK.

Spring 2019: Taxiway Romeo

A joint KTRK and FAA-sponsored Taxiway Romeo Airport Improvement Project (AIP) has been rescheduled for late spring 2019 (May – June), as soon as weather permits. The water line main replacement and 128,240-square-foot re-pavement project is anticipated to take 60 days and will impact all tenants in Alpha – Hotel hangar rows. Romeo is the perpendicular taxiway on the immediate north side of hangar rows A – H connecting the Jet Ramp to the Golf



Taxiway Romeo (highlighted in yellow) is the perpendicular taxiway immediately north of hangars A – H.

KTRK RADIO FREQUENCIES

TOWER/CTAF: 120.575 / GROUND: 118.3 (during tower operations) / AWOS: 118.0

UNICOM/FBO SERVICES: 122.95 / OAKLAND CTR: 127.95

THE BUSINESS OF THE AIRPORT IS YOUR BUSINESS



The Truckee Tahoe Airport District (TTAD) continually strives to improve safety, service and efficiency for users, and reduce annoyance for local residents. Following is an overview of projects and initiatives the Airport is currently working on to further these goals:

Executive Box Hangar Project Update

Comments heard around town about the structure going up on the far west side of the airfield include: "It's the new Raley's supermarket going up by the airport" and "Is that the new lumber yard location?" Nope, it's neither. Pictured are five of the 10 new 4,025-square-foot executive box hangars. The two hangar rows will be named November and Papa.

Nine of the hangars will be rented long term, and one will be heated and available for transient aircraft for short-term rentals and special community events. The \$7,000,000 project is on-schedule and on-budget with occupancy expected in late fall 2018. Of the 220 existing hangars at KTRK, 200 are considered T-hangars and 20 are executive box hangars. Once completed, the 10 new



Hangar Row November under construction summer 2018.

executive box hangars will bring the count up to 30 and fit aircraft types similar to the size of Pilatus PC12 & 24's, King Air 350's and small Citation CJ and Phenom 100 – 300 jets.

Summer 2018 Operations and Fuel Sales

The FAA defines an operation as a takeoff or a landing. Sixty percent of annual flight activity at KTRK occurs in the peak travel season between June and September, with July being the busiest month, often by a large margin. This July the airport recorded 6,397 flight operations excluding touch and go activity. Compared to July 2017, overall operations were flat month on month. Periods of dense smoke likely

influenced flight activity this July more than last. For the year, from January 1 to July 31, 2018, flight operations were up nine percent compared to the same period in 2017. 100LL fuel sales were flat, while Jet A sales showed growth, with a record set this summer of over 10,000 gallons sold in a single day.

Long-Term Parking

KTRK has 155 long-term vehicle parking spaces available just south of the transient aircraft ramp on Chandelle Way. As a result of growing demand for vehicle parking at our facility, parking passes will now only be available to aeronautical customers associated with a tail number or an air service provider. For information on how to apply for a parking permit or to see current rates, please visit our website at trucketahoeairport.com/guide/parking.

Update on Wash Rack Location

As many of you know, KTRK's aircraft wash rack located on the south end of the EAA building was shut down this past spring for water quality drainage issues. Airport staff and the district's engineer are looking at possible alternate sites. One front runner is the southeast corner of the ramp near the 100LL self-service island. If approved, we expect the facility to be operational in summer 2019. Updates will be communicated to all hangar tenants via email. Stay tuned!

ADS-B Installation a Possibility for KTRK

Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B)—a long term and a technical subject. KTRK is not covered by radar. ADS-B is the Next Generation solution designed to act as a data network of satellite and ground station coverage painting a full traffic picture for pilots and air traffic controllers. TTAD has been working to gain permission to add ADS-B surveillance service volume at KTRK for the past two years. In early August the FAA approved TTAD to enter negotiations with Harris Corporation to design and build an ADS-B station providing airborne coverage of aircraft from the ground to the flight levels over KTRK. Staff expects a contract and a final plan for installation, pending final Board approval in early 2019. The benefits? SAFETY, reduction of community annoyance, enhanced situational awareness, better operational data, and an airport ready to meet the transportation needs of our community.

AIRPORT HOURS OF OPERATION

Airport Operations: 7 a.m. – 9 p.m., 7 days a week
 Fuel: 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Self Serve 100LL: 7 a.m. – 9 p.m.
 ACAT Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of the month, 9:15 a.m.
 Board Meetings: 4th Wednesday of the month, 4:30 p.m.
 General Info: (530) 587-4119
 Red Truck Cafe: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Monday – Saturday
 Visit our website at trucketahoeairport.com.

COMMUNITY NEWS

EAA Takes Gold Star Kids on Scenic Flights Over Lake Tahoe

This past summer, 12 young men and women, ages 14–18, from Tennessee, New Jersey, Vermont, Nevada, Washington, Pennsylvania, Hawaii and California met at the Truckee Airport's EAA building for a Young Eagles Scenic Flight over Lake Tahoe, Donner Lake and the Sierra Valley. They saw the world from a perspective most people never experience. Who were these young people? They are Gold Star Kids, each one, at some point in his or her life, heard the devastating news that a family member had been killed while serving our country.

Chris Parkhurst, a retired Marine Colonel and an EAA member for 25 years, is on the Board of Directors of Freedom Hunters. His 501c program helps wounded veterans and their families enjoy the outdoors, make new friends and find new passions in their lives.

Chris realized children in these families live in pain, so he began to think about what he could do to help. He reached



out to the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. They had a list of Gold Star Families and were able to contact 12 young men and women to invite them to the United States Coast Guard Station on the shore of Lake Tahoe for a week of summer camp!

Chris said that these kids have lost a parent or sibling and are still maneuvering with the normal aspects of life, like school, friends and hormones. For the most part, they are living in a single-parent home. Their families are often financially struggling, so the kids may not have many opportunities to get to know the world. This is the first year for this summer camp. It is Chris's hope that it will help spark a passion in these young people's lives. He hopes, that by the end of the camp, the young people will not feel so alone and can support one another in the future.

More than 100 people gave their time and donations to make this possible. If you would like to be a part of this impactful experience, please contact chris@freedomhunters.org.

This article has been adapted for this publication. To view the full article, photos and a list of individuals and organizations that made the program possible, visit trucketahoeairport.com/news/239-gold-star-kids-summer-camp.

Attention Pilots! Important KTRK Winter Operations Meetings

Cool, crisp morning temperatures can only mean one thing—winter is around the corner. Whether you are a seasoned hangar tenant, new to KTRK, or a visiting pilot, it's important to be prepared for snow, ice, wind, low visibility and other challenges – both in the air and on the tarmac.

Weather conditions can be very specific and can change quickly, so it's always a good idea to take a look at the webcam at trucketahoeairport.com for a sneak peak at conditions, or call UNICOM for more in-depth information. It's important to not just check flying conditions, as snow plowing progress and hangar availability can also affect your plans.

When it comes to storm events, TTAD Operations and Maintenance

staff have a snow plowing priority schedule for the entire airfield.

The District will be holding two "Winter Ops" aviation community meetings this November. We invite all airport users to attend. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the needs of our pilot community and other airport users and to set expectations for KTRK's winter snow removal operations, runway closures, hangar access and tower operations.

Meeting dates are: **Thursday, November 8 and 15, from 6 – 8 p.m.** and will be held in the Board Rooms at the Main Terminal Building. Updates and reminders will be sent out by email as the dates get closer.



One of KTRK's plows in action following a winter storm.

Hangar tenants who experience any issues with the operation of their hangar door, or notice that the cables or mechanics appear compromised, should contact UNICOM on 122.95 or at (530) 587-4119 ext. 100.