



COMMUNITY NEWS

The Truckee Airport's Past, Present and Future

BY DAVID BUNKER



▲ A dirt landing strip known as "airport flats" was used by mail delivery aircraft traveling over Donner Summit.

More than 70 years ago, a group of forward-thinking community members envisioned a thriving airport in the Martis Valley that would support Truckee and Tahoe's regional economy. The area was not much more than sagebrush and bitterbrush in those days, but those visionaries' timing was impeccable.

The nation had just experienced what many historians refer to as the "Golden Age of Aviation"—a period between World War I and World War II, and the post-World War II "Jet Age," when aviation captivated the imagination of the country. The excitement surrounding the aerial feats of daring adventurers like Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart inspired a generation of aviators who took to the skies themselves in the post-war period. Regionally, there was also a push for Squaw Valley to host the 1960 Winter Olympics and, with that, a consensus a local airport could help that effort.

While the Truckee area already had an airstrip, it certainly did not address this boom in small plane aviation. Since 1933, a large open area near the current location of the I-80 agricultural inspection station—sometimes referred to as "airport flats"—was an emergency dirt landing strip for U.S. Air Mail service pilots who traversed the Sierra Nevada carrying letters and packages.

But the founders of the Truckee Tahoe Airport envisioned something much more

central to the growing tourism industry in Truckee and Tahoe. So, by 1958, the Truckee Tahoe Airport District was formed by a vote of the region's constituents. It was a bi-county special district airport, one of only nine such districts in the State of California today.

During those early years of the district, the board members spent countless hours pursuing state and federal funding to build out the infrastructure of the new airport. Interstate 80 had not been constructed yet, and the new airport was a vital and convenient connection to Truckee and Lake Tahoe.

"Back then it was just Highway 40," said Hardy Bullock, the Truckee Tahoe Airport's Director of Aviation and Community Services. "There was no way to get here easily. It was pretty remote."

The airport and Tahoe's tourism economy began growing in concert, as Tahoe developed into a national and international skiing destination and summer playground with the airport providing a convenient and speedy way to reach the area.

"Having an airport up here was a big thing for Tahoe," said Pat Northrop, whose mother Barbara served on the airport board for 21 years. "Skiing was just starting to hit up here at that time."

In the 60s and 70s, aviation became accessible to a larger portion of the population, as more affordable aircraft resulted in more and more pilots taking

to the sky. Meanwhile, Tahoe grew from a region with two main ski resorts—Squaw Valley and Sugar Bowl—into a destination with one of the largest concentrations of ski resorts in the country.

Throughout the 1980s, the region continued to develop, with new communities like Tahoe Donner and Northstar, driving primary and second home ownership and a general increase in the economy and tourism in the region.

But, by the 2000s, the growth of air traffic and a new community involvement in the airport began to signal a coming shift at the District. Community members voiced concerns about aircraft noise and the airport's connection to the surrounding community. The airport board and staff began focusing more attention to addressing community matters and aircraft noise concerns along with looking at ways the airport could positively impact the entire surrounding community, as well as create a quality aeronautical facility.

"It shifted the focus of the airport to not just being an aeronautical asset but a community asset as well," said Bullock. "Our philosophy now is that the airport should mirror the community it serves."

Today, the airport is focused on numerous community initiatives that would have been hard to imagine a couple decades ago. The airport has contributed to significant land conservation deals in the Martis Valley and beyond, limiting the amount of housing development that can occur under the airport's flight paths where aircraft noise has become a primary concern. Meanwhile, the district has funded affordable housing projects, supporting efforts that will provide housing for the local workforce, including airport staff.

One of the most consuming new efforts the district has taken on has been forest management. Much of that work has occurred on Martis Valley's Waddle Ranch property, 1,462 acres preserved by a number of partners, including the Airport District and the Truckee Donner Land Trust. The property, now owned by the Airport District, had been overgrown by wildfire-

susceptible vegetation, and, each summer, work continues to thin and treat the forest so it becomes resistant to catastrophic wildfire.

While much of the effort and energy at the Airport District has been concentrated on programs that benefit the wider community, the District has also continued to invest in its aviation services. It completed a new terminal building in 2012, with a pilots' lounge, a flight planning room, community meeting space and the popular Red Truck Cafe. The District also built an air traffic control tower in 2017 to safely manage air traffic and 10 new box hangars in 2019 to reduce the numbers on the hangar waitlist.

As the Airport District moves into the future, it will continue to provide a high quality aviation facility. Additionally, forest and lands management, transportation, affordable housing, community services and events, youth STEM programs, and aircraft noise mitigation remain top priorities. The airport is slated to install two new space-based satellite ADS-B flight

tracking ground stations in the spring of 2020. This new technology should help the Airport District improve flight path routing, enhance safety, and reduce carbon emissions, while continuing its mission to

minimize aircraft noise impacts on Truckee and Martis Valley neighborhoods.

"The airport has a very interesting heritage and legacy. It is our hope to build on that legacy into the future. From a staff perspective, we are very excited about what the future will bring—leveraging new technology

and offering benefit and value to all our District constituents," said Kevin Smith, Truckee Tahoe Airport's General Manager.

Much like the community around it, the Truckee Tahoe Airport District has undergone significant changes since its founding in 1958. But the committed community members, staff and board members who guide the District, much like the visionaries who founded it more than six decades ago, endeavor to shape the airport into a District that serves both aviators and the community that surrounds it.



▲ Winter visitors in front of the original terminal building.



TRK continues to evolve to meet the needs of the local community with a new modern terminal building.

AT THE AIRPORT

ROGER THAT!

BY LAUREL LIPPETT

What do building hot rods, enduring triathlons, and mastering complex equipment have in common? Roger Pynapple! And this 19-year veteran of the Truckee Tahoe Airport and lead maintenance technician is as interesting and colorful as his homeland.

Born in Hawera, New Zealand, Roger attended an Outward Bound program at age 18 and learned that he could run 12 miles, a goal for all attendees. After that first race, Roger swore he would never run again. But, Lance Blyde, a fellow Outward Bounder, suggested they run a marathon together, which Roger agreed to and did.

In time, Roger became president of the Auckland Outward Bound organization, further bonding his friendship with Lance and his wife Jan, and encouraging Roger's passion for competing in triathlons, marathons, and ultra-long distance races.

The tenacity that Roger applied to athletic challenges, he also used to pursue an engineering degree, then a tool and die maker apprenticeship, before hiring on at a Manukau, NZ Ford assembly plant.

Roger's upbringing laid the foundation for his engineering skills. "I would always pull stuff apart to see how it was made," he says. "Schooling wasn't great for me, but, once I began my technical engineering studies, things started to click."

His parents had emigrated after World War II from Holland to New Zealand where Roger's dad found

work with Shell Oil, then as a mechanical engineer in Indonesia and Singapore.

Running and world travel became a natural part of Roger's life. He ran his first marathon at 21 and now runs Ultra 100-mile and 200-mile races. This past year Roger completed the Tahoe 200 and



▲ Roger enjoying a bluebird day on the job at TRK. Photo Tom Lippert.

ran two other 200-mile plus races in three months earning him the Triple Crown title. He continues to compete in the Donner Lake Triathlon, which he first did in 1989.

At 60, Roger is one of the older competitors, and he still wants to do more. "It comes down to the knees. I've been running for 42 years, and I'm still able to do it, which I'm really happy about," he says with a genuine Kiwi smile.

Roger first learned to ski at Turoa in New Zealand while working on machinery "that no one else knew how to use." At the end of that season, then 26, he joined friends for his first ski season in the U.S. They chose Boreal at Donner Summit, and Roger was hired as a "liftie," staying at a youth hostel, the old Star Hotel on West River Street in downtown Truckee.

The seasonal lifestyle appealed to Roger, and he followed that first winter, and others, bicycling around Europe and Greece, hiking to base camps in Nepal, including Mt. Everest, and around Annapurna. "A common New Zealand thing to do is to get out of the country for a few years and look at the world to see what you can make of it," he says.

Roger loves old fast cars and built his first one at age 18. Some of his cars have won awards at shows, such as Hot August Nights in Reno. His Model A Ford has become his "daily driver" car, equipped with snow tires and fenders in winter. The license plate frame on the back of his shiny black Model A reads, "Western States 100-Mile Run Finisher," which often draws questions from strangers at car shows.

In 1992, on one of Roger's return trips to Tahoe, he met Lori who was working here for Fidelity National Title Co. A New Zealand camper van trip with Roger and his friends was a test of their mutual endurance, and Lori and Roger returned to the U.S. to marry and



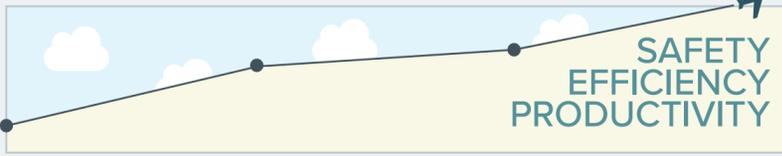
▲ Roger competing in the Tarawera Ultra Marathon in New Zealand.

make their home in Tahoe. When not providing event support during Roger's races, Lori can be found manicuring their beautiful yard in Prosser.

Roger's early jobs in Tahoe include grooming and lift maintenance supervisor at Northstar. While there in 2000, former Northstar mountain manager Phred Stoner, who had become maintenance manager at Truckee Tahoe Airport, invited Roger to give the job at the airport a try. Although Roger told him he knew nothing about airports, Phred knew he would be a good match.

Since then, Roger has become passionate about the airport while fixing and maintaining everything he can get his experienced hands on. He returns yearly to New Zealand to see family and friends, but Truckee is his home. "The climate, beauty of the trails, lakes and rivers, are what brought me here." And we're thrilled he's chosen to stay.

THE BUSINESS OF THE AIRPORT IS YOUR BUSINESS



2020 AIP Grant Funding

The Truckee Tahoe Airport (TRK) has received FAA grant funding for multiple summer 2020 AIP projects around the airfield. What is AIP money you may ask? AIP stands for the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. Typically, large and medium designated primary-hub airports (LAX, SFO or PDX) can receive grants that cover 75% of eligible project costs (or 80% for noise program implementation). For small primary, reliever, and general aviation airports like your Truckee Tahoe Airport, a grant covers a range of 90-95% of eligible costs, with TRK paying the balance. AIP funds come from the Airport and Airway Trust fund, which draws

support from airport user fees, fuel taxes and other aviation-based revenue sources.

For the upcoming 2020 construction season, TRK will receive \$4,892,625 from the FAA to help complete the following four projects:

\$382,500 – Relocate and expand the Care Flight Emergency Services Helipad and install a new fuel delivery system. The new helipad "ramp" will be built just to the west of the Care Flight office and will be increased in size to park two helicopters.

\$365,625 – Build an aircraft washrack area with a runoff collection system. The wash area will be located on the southeast side of the 100LL

Self Serve fuel island.

\$152,100 – Reconstruct the blastpad on the arrival end of Runway 29. A runway blastpad is a surface near the end of a runway provided to reduce the erosive effect of jet blast and propeller wash on the surrounding surfaces. The area is typically covered by chevron markings.

\$3,992,400 – Reconstruct parallel taxiway Alpha from taxiway Echo (in front of the terminal building) going west to the runup area for Runway 11.

These projects will help to ensure TRK remains a high quality general aviation airport serving the local community.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ADS-B TECHNOLOGY ON THE HORIZON

For the past three years, staff at Truckee Tahoe Airport District (TTAD) has done extensive research and studies to gather information around the benefits, impacts and costs of installing an Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcasting (ADS-B) ground station at Truckee Tahoe Airport (TRK). This preliminary background work included several trips to Washington, D.C. to hold meetings with our congressional representatives, the FAA, and Harris Corporation, the FAA's prime ADS-B contractor and service provider. TTAD also launched a robust public outreach campaign to inform its constituents about the proposed ADS-B program.

Due to the mountainous terrain of our region, aircraft currently flying the skies of the Sierra below 10,000 feet mean sea level are often not visible to regional air traffic control (ATC) centers in Northern Nevada and California. Installation of ADS-B will not only enhance safety, but will also increase air traffic efficiency. Currently, ATC cannot "see" aircraft in the area once they drop below ridge lines, allowing ATC to clear only one aircraft flying IFR (on instrument flight rules) in or out of TRK airspace at a time. This often puts aircraft in holding patterns over our skies, creating unnecessary noise and annoyance, air traffic congestion and flight delays, and adds needless aircraft exhaust emissions to our atmosphere.

Harris Corporation studied the airspace over our region and determined that two ground stations strategically located would be needed, one at TRK (on the roof of the air traffic control tower) and the second at South Lake Tahoe Airport (TVL), to adequately cover the airspace over both Martis



King Air F90 cockpit ADS-B panel view over Modesto.

Valley and the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Detailed staff reports, presentations, and consultant data were presented to the Airport Board. In a unanimous 5-0 vote at their June 26, 2019 meeting, the Board of Directors approved the approximate \$1,000,000 expenditure to move forward with the two proposed ADS-B ground station installations. The Truckee Tahoe Airport District, working with Harris Corporation, will be the first airport in the U.S. to install its own ADS-B ground stations in the summer of 2020.

For more information on ADS-B, visit the Airport District ADS-B webpage at truckeetahoeairport.com/aviation.ads-b, and/or contact Hardy Bullock, Director of Aviation & Community Services, at hardy.bullock@truckeetahoeairport.com, or call (530) 587-7940.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Airport Lands Management Plan



Waddle Ranch at dusk. Photo by Greyson Howard.

In 2019 the Truckee Tahoe Airport District Board of Directors requested that staff develop a comprehensive Lands Management Plan (LMP). The District owns a diverse group of parcels supporting its aeronautical and community missions totaling approximately 2,500 acres within the Martis Valley region. The goal of an LMP is to designate long-term strategic goals for various types of land. Some of these goals include water quality, fire prevention, environmental protection, impact mitigation, and the creation of public access open space and trails.

and included participants such as Tahoe Donner Association, Truckee Fire Protection District, Truckee Donner Public Utility District, the Truckee Donner Land Trust, and Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District. The Board will be hearing from the lead consultant group and staff in the spring of 2020 to set the final deliverables, goals, and objectives. Additional public outreach will occur in the near future. For additional information, contact Hardy Bullock, Director of Aviation & Community Services at hardy.bullock@truckeetahoeairport.com.

TTAD Supports Free TART Fares

Your Truckee Tahoe Airport District, as part of its "Regional Transportation Mission," provides for public transportation outside of just aviation. This is a common practice with airports across the country. The Airport District has a long history of financially supporting local bus routes (Hwy 267 Kings Beach to Truckee leg of the resort triangle), free ridership programs like the Truckee Holiday Shuttle and the summer Truckee Thursday shuttle, along with the North Tahoe Express that makes regularly scheduled runs to the Reno-Tahoe Airport.

Placer County and the Town of Truckee operate the regional transit service co-branded as Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit or TART. The Town of Truckee first started implementing free transit on the TART routes operated by the Town in the summer of 2018 and saw ridership numbers increase by up to 32%. The Placer County Board of Supervisors provided direction to staff to implement free fares on county-run TART routes beginning this winter. The Town of Truckee and Placer County requested that the Airport District support the TART free fare program for the first two years with funding in the amount of \$321,800. The airport's funding commitment will support 25% of the regional free fare



Local partners collaborate to offer free fare service.

program. The County, the Town, and resort partners are providing the other 75%.

Free transit is a key component of a quality, complete transportation system and has multiple benefits to the North Lake Tahoe region's economy and environment. Free transit is part of the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction strategies in the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Transportation Plan. Pilot program success would be measured by increased ridership, which translates to VMT reduction and air quality improvement, and also enhances regional transit system connectivity (of which the airport is a component). Along with reduced number of cars on our roads, other benefits of free transit include the simplification and speeding of the passenger boarding process. This results in less dwell time at bus stops and better schedule adherence.

ABOUT THE AIRPORT

Hours of Operation

Airport: 7 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Fuel: 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Red Truck: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Mon. – Sat.)

Contact

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