

Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Program

Vol. 75, No 8 August 2026

Help Plan the 2027 Montana Aviation Conference

The planning process for the 2027 Montana Aviation Conference is getting started, and volunteers are needed to help organize next year's event in Missoula. The annual conference is one of Montana's signature aviation events, bringing together a wide range of aviation professionals, organizations, and enthusiasts from around the state.

If you are interested in helping shape conference topics, support planning efforts, and contribute to a successful event, this is a great opportunity to get involved. Anyone who would like more information or would like to join the committee is encouraged to contact Kelly Atkins at katkins@mt.gov.



New Study Shows Aviation's Statewide Value

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Program highlighted new findings this summer from the 2026 Aeronautics Economic Impact Study showing an estimated \$6.5 billion in total economic output and more than 39,000 jobs tied to aviation activity in Montana. Those figures show that aviation is not a niche interest in Montana; it is a major economic and transportation asset supporting tourism, business travel, public safety, medical access, and workforce development.

Bozeman is projected to serve about 2.9 million passengers in 2026 and generate roughly \$2.2 billion in annual economic activity, accounting for about one-third of all aviation jobs and output in the state. At the same time, smaller community airports and backcountry strips remain critical for wildfire response, search and rescue, recreation, flight training, and access to remote areas.

That balance between major passenger airports and remote-access aviation is one of Montana's defining strengths.

Aeronautics Enters August With Steady Services and Room to Grow

MDT Aeronautics entered the summer under a new Aeronautics Program structure after a review of operational needs and alignment within the department, while keeping the services Montana aviation users depend on in place. Under that structure, the Aeronautics Program Manager oversees the Safety, Education & Registration Section, the Airports, Airways & Grants Section, and the Yellowstone Airport Proprietary Program Section.

The change was designed to improve coordination, support operational efficiency, and create flexibility for future growth rather than reduce services. For airport sponsors, pilots, volunteers, and aviation businesses, that message matters in August because this is one of the busiest times of year for flying, project work, community events, and public outreach.

New MDT Aviation Program Manager Matt Lindberg replaced Tim Conway who retired at the end of last year. Matt is honored and excited to lead Aeronautics into the future.

Museum of Mountain Flying Camp Creates a Week to Remember

A unique summer camp in Missoula recently gave young participants the chance to explore Montana aviation and outdoor traditions in one unforgettable week. Hosted by the Museum of Mountain Flying, the Mountain Flying & Fishing Camp combined aviation history, activities, fly fishing, and hands-on learning in a setting deeply connected to Montana's mountain flying heritage.

Throughout the five-day camp, students explored museum exhibits, learned fly tying and casting, built and tested model aircraft, spent time fishing outdoors, and worked with aviation volunteers on basic aircraft construction activities. The week concluded with Young Eagles flights, giving campers the opportunity to experience the excitement of flight firsthand after spending the week learning how aviation and Montana's outdoor culture intersect.

The program is a strong example of how local museums, Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) volunteers, and community partners can work together to introduce the next generation to aviation in a meaningful and memorable way.

Great job to all involved in making this camp happen!



Field Maintenance Keeps Remote Aviation Usable

Some of the most important Aeronautics work receives little public attention. In May, Aeronautics staff completed maintenance at the Scobey Border Station airstrip by filling gopher holes, mitigating weeds and rodents, changing the windsock, and performing other routine work. Those tasks may sound small, but they directly affect whether remote aviation infrastructure remains safe and usable.

Scobey is one of three general aviation airports on the U.S.-Canada border managed by MDT Aeronautics. MDT advised pilots to contact both U.S. and Canadian customs regarding crossing restrictions and transition procedures, reinforcing that border-strip operations require extra coordination beyond domestic flying.

This kind of field work illustrates a larger truth about Montana aviation: reliability depends on both major capital projects and ordinary maintenance. Safe surfaces, visible windsocks, and controlled vegetation are often what keep small airports functional when users need them most.

Two Airports Awarded Courtesy Car Grants

Two airports were awarded Courtesy Car grants for the state fiscal year 2027. Applications were available April 1, 2026 - May 31, 2026, and two applications were received. The award was increased this year to provide up to three reimbursable \$10,000 grants. Previously we offered up to four reimbursable \$5,000 grants. The airports who were offered awards are Big Sandy and Thompson Falls.

In the last few years, the following airports have accepted a grant to purchase a courtesy vehicle for their airport: Eureka, Laurel, Glendive, Harlowton, Geraldine, Ronan, Roundup, and Three Forks.

The next application period for up to a \$10,000 courtesy car grant will be open April 1 to May 31, 2027, for those airports interested in applying.

For more information, contact Karen Hallenbeck at 406-444-9581.



National Airport Funding Matters Locally

Federal aviation funding remains highly relevant to Montana's airport system. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced multiple airport grants totaling \$1.776 billion for upgrades across the United States, including runway rehabilitation and other infrastructure work. In Montana, those national programs matter because state Aeronautics grants are frequently part of the local match or broader funding package that makes airport projects possible.

This national funding picture is especially important in a state where airports support commercial service, backcountry access, medical transport, wildfire operations, and search and rescue. When federal investment and safety oversight improve airport resilience, smaller states with large geographic needs often see outsized benefits.

For Montana readers, the practical takeaway is that national airport policy is not distant news. It directly influences project timelines, construction priorities, and the ability of local communities to maintain safe and reliable airport access.



August Events Keep Airport Communities Active

Montana's aviation calendar remains full of events that connect pilots, families, and future aviators. Events like the EAA Chapter 344 Young Eagles Flight Rally in Helena on August 8, the Hysham Fly-In on August 9th, the MPA Central Montana Fly-In in Lewistown on August 15, a military airshow in Billings August 22 to 23, followed by the Harlowton Fly-In on August 29.

These events give local residents a reason to visit airports, help young people meet pilots and aircraft owners, and strengthen volunteer networks that keep community aviation culture healthy.

MDT's broader event calendar shows that this kind of programming remains central to Aeronautics' public role. Even in a state with long travel distances, local airport events continue to create face-to-face entry points into aviation and we have had a great season seeing so many of you enjoying these events!

See the calendar below for more events and details!



Yellowstone International Air Show Returns to Billings

Mark your calendar for August 22 to 23, when the Yellowstone International Air Show returns to Billings Logan International Airport for a full weekend of aviation excitement. This year's show will feature the U.S. Navy Blue Angels along with additional performers, static displays, vendors, and family-friendly attractions.

The public schedule lists gates opening at 9 a.m., the air show starting at 11 a.m., and the Blue Angels taking to the sky at 3 p.m. each day. For aviation enthusiasts across Montana, it promises to be one of the premier aviation events of the year and a great opportunity to experience a major air show right here in our home state.

For more information, visit: yellowstoneairshow.com/



Calendar of Events

August 8 - EAA Chapter 344 Young Eagles Flight Rally. Helena. ~~Canceled.~~

August 9 - Hysham Fly-In. Breakfast available for a small donation 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information, contact Ruth Baue at 406-342-5328.

August 15 - MPA Central Montana Fly-In, Lewistown. 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Hosted by the MPA Central Montana Hangar. We will be serving scrambled eggs, sausage and Jeff and Stacy Martinez's world famous, cinnamon chip pancakes! For more information, contact Pete Smith at 406-366-1435 or pete180@gmail.com.

August 21 to 23 - Montana Fun Weekend Fly-In and Car Show. Cutbank. Breakfast served Friday and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. for \$15.00. For more information, contact Rick Geiger at 406-949-5709.

August 29 - Harlowton Fly-In. 6:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Hosted by the the 44 Flyers. Breakfast is free, donations accepted. For more information contact Jason Loose at 406-350-0422.

September 6 - Red Lodge Wings and Wheels Fly-In/Cruise In. 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Free pancake breakfast. For more information, contact Bo Enwald at 406-425-1591.

September 12 - MPA North Central Hanger Fly-In. Havre. 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Breakfast will be served 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. All activities will be completed by 11 a.m. For more information, contact William Hurd at 406-945-3646 or pronghorn@mcn.net.

September 19 - MPA South Central Fly-In. Laurel. Starts at 8 a.m. Static displays including War Birds! Food trucks and local vendors. Contact John at 406-855-2372 or email at johnfredroberts@gmail.com.

September 19 - EAA Chapter 344 Young Eagles Flight Rally. Helena. Montana EAA Chapter 344 will be hosting a free Young Eagles Flight Rally for youths ages 8 to 17 from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the MDT Aeronautics building (2630 Airport Road). Online registration (required) go to eaa.org/ea/youth/free-ye-flights or contact Dave Lehman, Young Eagles Coordinator at YEchapter344@earthlink.net.

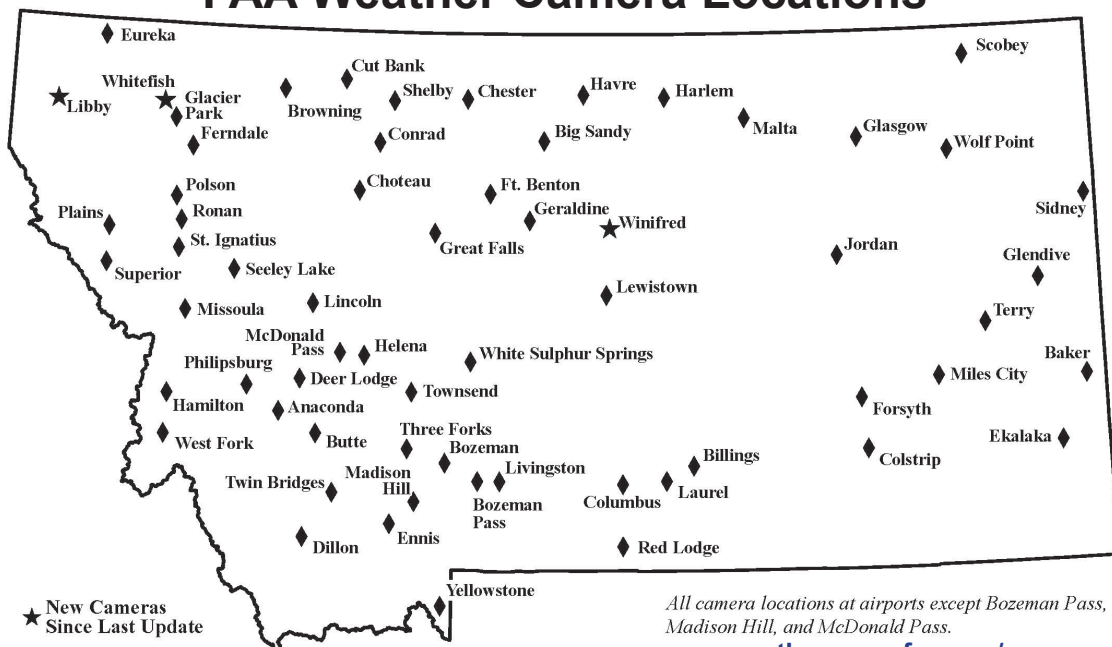
September 19 - Lincoln Fly-In. The Lincoln Airport Foundation will be hosting a pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. For more information, contact Doug Vulcan at 406-362-4473 or vulcandg406@gmail.com.

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