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Commercialization of next-generation transportation platforms begin at AllianceTexas

The true process for creating an idea, making it a reality, testing it, proving it - and then commercializing it – moves business and our world forward.

In 2020, Hillwood launched the Mobility Innovation Zone (MIZ) at AllianceTexas, located in north Fort Worth, as a first-of-its-kind "do tank" leading the nation in smart infrastructure deployment to create a digital and physical commercialization environment for partner companies. Connecting people, places and ideas that push innovation in surface and air mobility forward by leveraging its one-of-a-kind infrastructure, the MIZ offers mobility visionaries full access to an unparalleled testing ecosystem, resources and partnerships essential to comprehensively test, scale and commercialize the latest mobility technologies.

"Making the implementation and commercialization of next-generation mobility initiatives, such as autonomous package delivery drones, a daily reality is much closer than you might think," said Russell Laughlin, executive vice president for strategic development and innovation of Hillwood. "What we're telling people today is that we're not years away from it, we're months, even weeks away from some of these things happening."

In fact, TuSimple, a global technology company with a focus on self-driving, heavy-duty trucks, is launching expanded autonomous trucking operations from the MIZ with a Hillwood-developed freight terminal. This facility will support the company's continued expansion into the "Texas Triangle" (Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin) and connect into TuSimple's cross-country autonomous freight corridor with routes beginning this year.

"The AllianceTexas Mobility Innovation Zone provides the perfect infrastructure, landscape and scale for the company to launch its national expansion and 'Texas Triangle' operations," said Texas Governor Greg Abbott in an announcement addressing the partnership between this autonomous trucking innovator and Hillwood.

"Companies like TuSimple are drawn to the unique opportunity that a location within AllianceTexas offers," noted Lee White, TuSimple's vice president of strategy. "TuSimple is building the world's first autonomous freight network, and an important part of our strategy is to secure suitable locations for our terminals. The Mobility Innovation Zone is exactly what we were looking for."

"This is one of the most unique pieces of real estate combined with infrastructure in the United States," noted Ian Kinne, director of logistics innovation for Hillwood. "We are developing an ecosystem of technology-enabled logistics facilities directly between two 11,000-foot runways and one of the world's largest inland ports with immediate proximity to I-35W, I-30 and highways 114 and 170. This is an unmatched environment for our partners to commercialize revolutionary logistics technology."

From the ground to the air, the cradle of innovation offered by the MIZ is taking flight into commercialized opportunities. Bell is one of a few companies currently conducting flight test activity at the newly established AllianceTexas Flight Test Center with its Autonomous Pod Transport (APT). Bell's APT program, designed to be capable of various missions from package delivery to critical medical transport and disaster relief, will carve a path forward for future commercial operations to solve the supply chain challenges our world currently faces.





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"Bell is proud to partner with Hillwood and have the opportunity to test our aircraft in our own backyard of Dallas-Fort Worth," said John Wittmaak, program manager, small-medium UAS. "AllianceTexas offers a unique testing ground for the Bell Autonomous Pod Transport to enhance the aircraft's autonomous features."

The testing and launch of the APT program, which represents a unique partnership between Bell, Hillwood, BNSF, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), will create the opportunity to take the movement of goods airborne and create the set of standards by which they operate. "In this case, Bell is providing the airframe, BNSF the pathway, and the FAA the needed approval and oversight. This type of unique partnership is essential and will help bring cutting-edge technology to North Texas," said Christopher Ash, vice president of business development of Alliance Air Services/Fort Worth Alliance Airport. "Hillwood serves as the facilitator to create and nurture an ecosystem that will one day attract manufacturers and ultimately let these vehicles take goods to market."

"Our goal is to provide an environment that attracts small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) manufacturers to North Texas. We want to assist in the process as they go through flight testing certification and the integration process into the national airspace system (NAS), and, when they're done, have the capability to deliver goods to your door," Ash added.

"Whether it's on the ground side or the air side, the AllianceTexas portfolio, the complex airspace, the geographic location with the mass population of DFW - all of those things create this unique ecosystem and make us stand out."

Activities in the MIZ include advancements in technology for short-haul trucking, or drayage, with autonomous movements in the yard and in the truck courts. Innovations here will help connect and enable end-to-end autonomy of the receipt of goods from ports like Long Beach, California, to distribution centers like those at AllianceTexas, making the opportunity viable for commercial applications across the country.

"The MIZ, especially with the service-use applications, is all about the commercialization of these new technologies," Kinne said. "The MIZ was designed to be used for so much more than just testing. It's making cutting-edge, innovative ideas a reality for people across the country to see in their daily lives. That's the key to why we're different than every other incubator across the globe."

For more on the AllianceTexas Mobility Innovation Zone visit us at www.alliancetexasmiz.com .