



NEWS RELEASE

Travis County *STAR Flight*

7800 Old Manor Road, Austin TX 78724

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Travis County to Purchase Fire Fighting Helicopter

As a part of the Travis County 2013 budget, Travis County is purchasing a UH-1H, a military surplus, Huey-type helicopter. This aircraft will be refurbished in like new condition. Its primary mission is wildland fire observation and suppression. It is capable of transporting wildland fire fighters (hand crews), increasing access to remote or difficult terrain. The aircraft will also respond during regional disasters, as a part of homeland security and in support of Travis County Parks projects, such as controlled burns in green belts and preserves.

The aircraft's mission is focused on fire fighting, unlike *STAR Flight's* other three helicopters that conduct many different types of missions, such as EMS, search and rescue, law enforcement assists and firefighting. *STAR Flight* is planning on partnering with Travis County-based fire departments on the helicopter's use and staffing. After a purchase order is approved, the aircraft will join *STAR Flight's* fleet within an estimated three to six months.

STAR Flight currently has three EC-145 helicopters, and the new aircraft will bring enhanced capabilities to the *STAR Flight* program. Unlike the current EC-145s, the new aircraft will have a fixed, belly tank that holds up to 350 gallons of water, much more than the EC-145s' 130-gallon attached Bambi bucket. The fixed tank offers some safety advantages for use in urban environments and can hold fire suppressing foam. The tank is filled from lakes, ponds/tanks, a fire apparatus or using the *STAR Flight* pumpkins, which are transportable water tanks.

In addition, the new aircraft has a greater load capacity. Its maximum take-off weight is 9,500 pounds, compared to the EC-145's 7,900 pounds.

Some *STAR Flight* pilots have flown the Huey aircraft during their military careers. All pilots and staff will require initial and ongoing training.

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