

Push Begun For Airport At Big Bend

Standard-Times Austin Bureau

AUSTIN — Big Bend National Park needs an airport so tourists such as Mrs. Lyndon Johnson won't be forced to drive 100 miles to reach it.

That's the view of Charles Murphy, director of Texas Aeronautics Commission, who is working to do something about air connections to the remote area.

"The First Lady's recent trip just emphasized the situation," Murphy said. "Her party landed at Presidio County Airport near Marfa. They had to go by car the rest of the way — more than 100 miles."

The Presidio County strip is an old Army facility. It's not what Murphy and the TAC have in mind for Big Bend.

"We'd like to see a really first-class airport adjacent to the park — one like those at Grand Canyon and Yellowstone," Murphy explained. "And we're now working on just such a project in cooperation with the federal government."

The director said the proposed airport now is in the stage of "advanced discussion." There are a number of details to be decided, he added, but the proposal is for the U. S. to build the facilities and then turn it over to Texas for actual operation and maintenance.

"You cannot operate effectively today without air connections," Murphy declared. "An airport at Big Bend would open that spectacular area to tourists throughout the world."

In national publicity given Mrs. Johnson's tour, it was mentioned that even Texans had not taken full advantage of seeing the wild expanses because of its remoteness.