FAA Mobile Clearance Tool: No More Verbal Ping Pong

Chris Shieff
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The FAA want us off the radio. And with good reason. **More than half of IFR clearance requests are still done the old fashioned way, via VHF.**

Familiar with this routine? **You key the mic for your IFR clearance and get nothing back.** Three other aircraft, a taxi request and a full route read back to somewhere random in North Dakota are all fighting for the same slice of frequency. When it finally comes through, it's is delivered fast and flat. Altitude, route, departure frequency, squawk all in one breath as you fumble to write it down. Halfway through the read back the squawk code evaporates from your memory. You ask for a repeat and still manage to botch a digit anyway. Now it's just getting embarrassing.

Multiply that by tens of thousands of clearances and its easy to see why a system that simply **displays the clearance rather than relying on a game of verbal ping-pong** sounds appealing.

So put down your paddles

That's exactly what the FAA has set out to achieve with its Mobile Clearance tool and the idea is simple: instead of the radio, you request your clearance right from an app on your phone or tablet, and it **comes back to you as text.**

How does it work?

At a participating airport, you file your IFR flight plan through a supported app – right now that's **Foreflight** or **Garmin Pilot** – and then you request your clearance from inside the app itself.

ATC sends it back as text for you to check over before you accept it. The FAA says the goal is fewer-read back errors, and less time on routine clearance delivery which frees up controllers to focus on more safety-critical tasks like separation.

If that sounds a bit like the **datalink** clearances airlines have used for years, that's because it's built on the same logic – just scaled down for GA and BizAv aircraft who haven't had access to it before.

ForeFlight

Jeppesen ForeFlight announced its side of Mobile Clearance at Oshkosh on July 23, calling it a joint build with the FAA.

It's built into ForeFlight Mobile and can even handle amended and revised clearances too. So if ATC change their mind about something after the fact, you'll get a notification in the app to accept or reject it.

ForeFlight also confirmed a feature to cancel your IFR is coming – especially handy at non-towered airports.

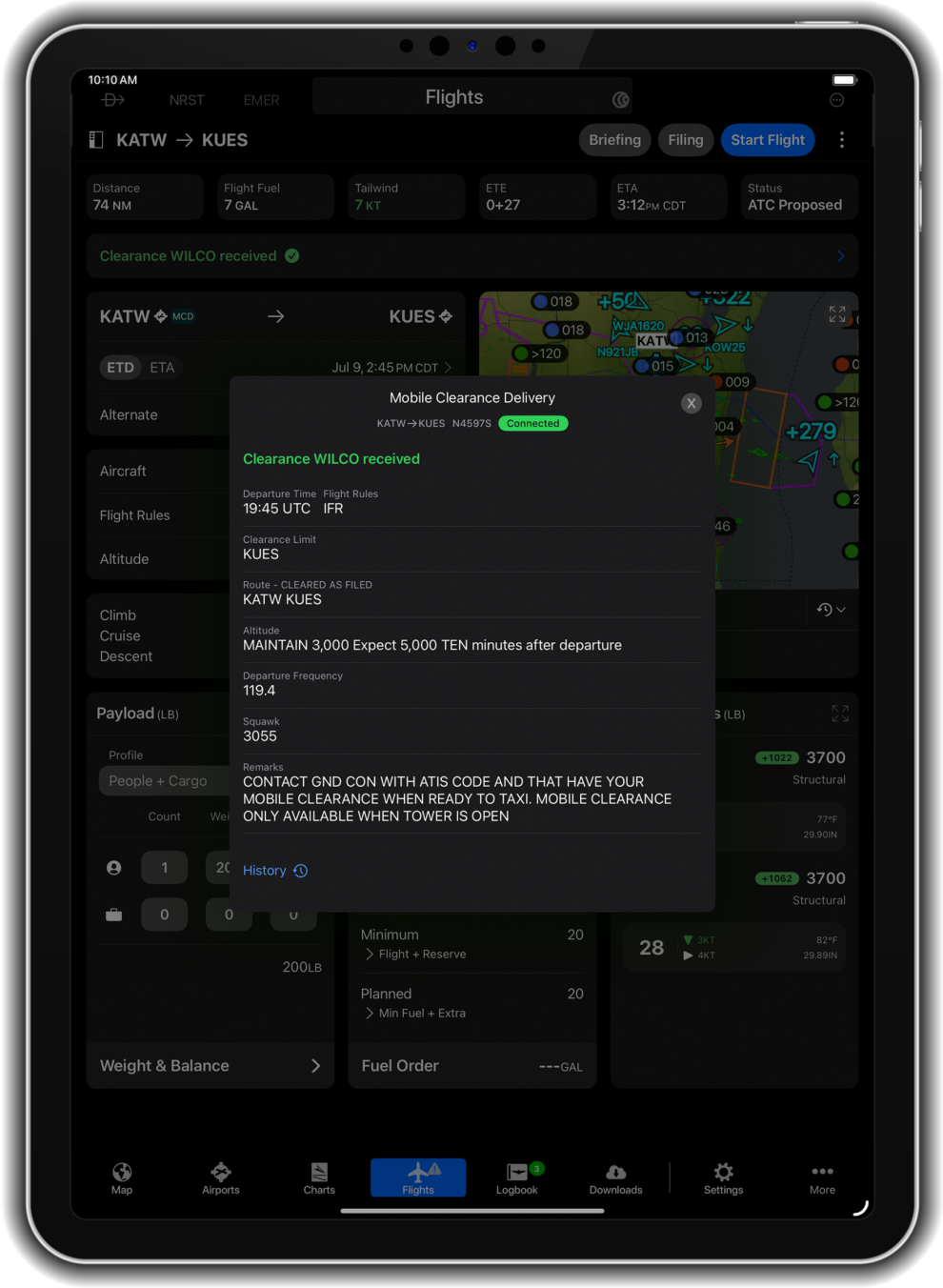
Right now it's live at a growing number of Texas airports with more states planned.

Garmin

Garmin Pilot is the other launch partner, and it **works a little differently.**

Once you've filed an IFR flight plan from a participating airport, Garmin Pilot Premium subscribers can open a Mobile Clearance Delivery session from the 'Flights' page, starting about 30 mins before you plan to go wheels-up.

The clearance is stored in the app for up to 48 hrs incase you need to check it again.



Status of the roll out.

Mobile Clearance isn’t nationwide yet, but will be soon.

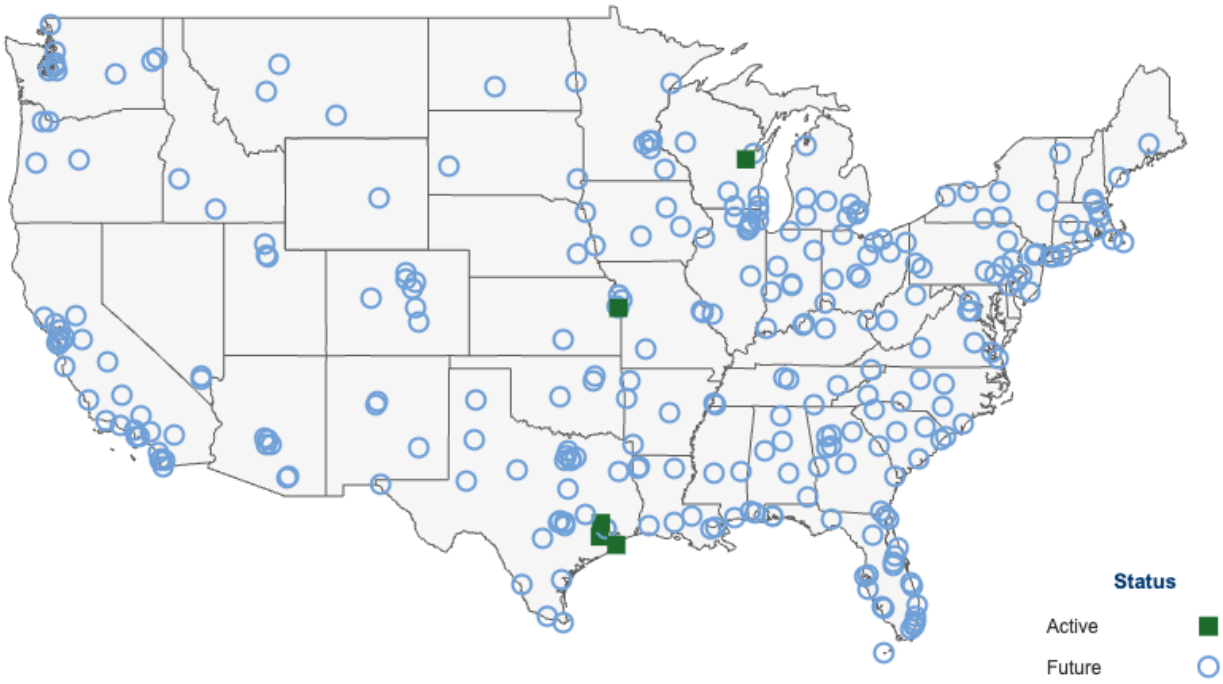
The FAA has been quietly beavering away on this since 2016. Simulations took place in 2024, and then real-world testing began in May this year at several Houston-area airports.

This was expanded over the summer to include **KATW/Appleton** and **KIXD/New Century.**

The rollout will now continue to the **Kansas City, Nashville and Austin** areas this fall.

The evaluation period will officially end this coming February, before deployment to airports **across the US.**

Milestones	Description
2016	Concept development and testing begins in collaboration with MITRE.
2024	Tower and pilot simulation testing begins at the FAA's William J. Hughes Technical Center.
May 2026	Operational evaluation opens in Houston, TX, area airports, including Sugar Land Regional Airport (SGR), Scholes International Airport (GLS), and David Wayne Hooks Memorial Airport (DWH).
Summer 2026	Operational evaluation expands to Appleton International Airport (ATW), New Century AirCenter (IXD).
Fall 2026	IFR cancellation feature becomes available via Houston's Terminal Radar Approach Control (I90), and operational evaluation expands to Kansas City Downtown (MKC), Johnson County/Olathe (OJC), Austin Executive (EDC), Georgetown (GTU), and San Marcos (HYI).
February 2027	End of evaluation period and deployment of final product to airports across the nation.



Click to access the FAA's interactive map.

What about right now?

If you're flying through Houston, Appleton or New Century this season, don't be surprised if this comes up up. **But treat it as a bonus, not a replacement for your normal procedures.** The tool is still being evaluated, so if your clearance isn't available, or the app isn't working for some reason, still be ready to hop on the radio and get your clearance the old-fashioned way.

We'll keep tracking the roll-out as more airports come online. **If you fly though one of the test locations and give it a try, we'd love to hear how it went.** You can reach us via blog@ops.group.