D/FW manager's salary may soar to be nation's highest

By Scott Williams
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

D/FW AIRPORT — Oris Dunham Jr., the top administrator at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport for the past four years, has been recommended for a $20,000-a-year pay raise, which would make him the highest-paid public airport manager in the United States.

The recommendation to boost Dunham's salary to $165,000 also apparently would establish Dunham as the second highest-paid public official in the Metroplex.

Scheduled for consideration Aug. 7 by the 11-member D/FW Airport Board, the pay raise recommendation comes just weeks after Dunham was a finalist for a $500,000-a-year job at an airport in Hong Kong.

Dunham, who has dropped out of the competition for the Hong Kong job, said that the episode prompted the airport board's compensation committee to consider raising his salary, but that he did not use it as a bargaining chip.

"I'm obviously extremely pleased," he said. "I told them we didn't have to be the leader, but I didn't want to be trailing too much."

In fact, the pay raise would push Dunham past his counterpart at Los Angeles International Airport as the country's highest-paid public airport official. Clifton Moore, who has run the Los Angeles airport for more than two decades, earns $153,000 a year.

Ironically, Dunham was Moore's assistant before leaving California to take the helm at D/FW in 1986.

Members of the D/FW Airport Board this week had high praise for Dunham — with some describing him as the best in the business — but were non-committal on whether they would approve the raise.

Airport board member Billy Allen, when asked about making Dunham the country's highest-paid airport official, said the recommendation will first have to be reviewed.

"There probably are a lot of ways you can measure Mr. Dunham," Allen said. "I think he's doing a great job."

Fort Worth Mayor Bob Bolen, also an airport board member, said that before approving the pay raise, he will compare Dunham's salary with those of other airport administrators in the country and other public officials in the Metroplex.

"That's getting close to the presidential range," Bolen said of the recommendation, referring to President Bush's $200,000 annual salary.

Actually, a survey of public officials' salaries in Fort Worth-Dallas found that Dunham still would trail the pay of at least one: Parkland Hospital President Ron J. Anderson, who earns

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