

STATE OF KANSAS

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE
1006 N. THIRD, P.O. BOX 857
SALINA, KS 67402-0857



PHONE: 785-823-3754
FAX: 785-823-1649
WWW.KSDOT.ORG

GOVERNOR JEFF COLYER, M.D.
RICHARD CARLSON, SECRETARY

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For more information:

Laurie Arellano
785-291-3956
Laurie.arellano@ks.gov

KDOT announces selection to drone test program

Topeka – The Kansas Department of Transportation has been selected as one of 10 participants to participate in the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program, an initiative aimed at shaping the future of drones in America.

The UAS Integration Pilot Program is an opportunity for state, local and tribal governments to partner with private sector entities, such as UAS operators or manufacturers, to accelerate safe UAS integration.

“This is a terrific opportunity to explore new ways to use this technology to reduce the risks to our workers during infrastructure inspections, search and rescue and remote area assessments,” said Secretary of Transportation Richard Carlson.

With about 140,000 miles of public roads, many in rural areas, Kansas is an ideal location to test the technology, which will benefit not only transportation but also agriculture and many other industries doing business in Kansas.

The program will partner with industry and local agencies to test the use of unmanned aircraft across a variety of applications that will help transportation departments operate more safely and efficiently, including assessing weather-affected roads, conducting bridge inspections with minimal impact to traffic and even locating and assisting stranded motorists more quickly.

The program is expected foster a meaningful dialogue on the balance between local and national interests related to UAS integration and provide actionable information to the U.S. DOT regarding the expanded and universal integration of UAS into the National Airspace System.

“KDOT strives to be on the cutting edge of transportation technology,” Carlson said. “We are always looking for better, more efficient ways to help make travel safer for Kansans, visitors and the commercial industries that depend on our roads.”

More information on the UAS Integration Pilot program can be found at https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/uas_integration_pilot_program/splash/.

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