The Kansas Airport System

There is a strong relationship between Kansas' economy and aviation. The state's system of seven commercial service and 73 general aviation airports, listed in the National Plan of Integrated Airports System (NPIAS), provide the gateway to the nation's air transportation system and the world's economy. Airports support the Kansas economy by increased efficiency and productivity for all business activity, including the transportation of passengers for both recreational and business purposes. Airports are important economic catalysts, supporting thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity. Most of Kansas' largest employers – both large and small – rely on the state's aviation system to transport employees, customers, supplies, and products. Kansas' 80 NPIAS airports serve as the base of operations for a variety of businesses, including airlines, air cargo companies, flight instructors, charters, concessionaries, government entities, and many others. Kansas tourism industry also depends on the state's system of airports to accommodate thousands of visitors each year.

Study Process

The Kansas Department of Transportation, Division of Aviation, implemented this study through a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant, to quantify the economic impact and relationship between the state's system of airports and the economy. The study follows an approved methodology that has successfully quantified the value of airports and airport systems throughout the United States.

The economic contribution of each NPIAS airport in Kansas was measured in terms of employment, payroll, and output. A comprehensive survey process was used to calculate the direct economic benefits related to on-airport businesses and government agencies, including the indirect benefits associated with visitor-related expenditures. Secondary, or induced, impacts from these airport activities were calculated using economic models specific to Kansas. For example, when an airport employee purchases goods and services, those dollars circulate through the local economy which results in additional economic activity in the region. The total economic impact is the sum of all direct, indirect, and multiplier impacts.

Statewide Impacts

Based on information gathered during the study, approximately 91,000 jobs are attributed to the aviation industry, including 42,000 from Aerospace Manufacturing. These employees receive more than $4.4 billion in total payroll, and generate more than $20.5 billion in total economic activity. In addition, the 80 NPIAS airports in Kansas provide a number of health, welfare, and safety benefits, including aerial agricultural spraying, medical transport and evacuation, emergency response, search and rescue, flight training, law enforcement, wildlife management, military training, search and rescue operations, and education.

Kansas’ Total Annual Economic Benefits from Aviation

| Total Jobs | 91,279 |
| Total Payroll | $4.4 Billion |
| Total Output | $20.6 Billion |

Impact Measures

Employment measures the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs related to airport activity including on-airport construction. A part-time employee counts as half a full-time employee.

Payroll measures the total annual wages and benefits paid to all workers whose salaries are directly attributable to airport activity.

Economic Activity (Output) measures the value of goods and services related to airports in Kansas. The output from on-airport business activity is assumed to be the sum of annual gross sales and average annual capital expenditures.
Great Bend Municipal Airport is located four miles west of the City of Great Bend within an industrial park. The airport is included in the FAA’s National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), making it eligible to receive federal monies. Additionally, its role within the Kansas Aviation System Plan is identified as a Commercial airport. Commercial airports accommodate scheduled air carrier service as well as all general aviation aircraft.

Great Bend Municipal Airport has two runways that can accommodate a variety of aircraft including jet and general aviation aircraft. The primary runway, Runway 17/35, is 7,851 feet long and the secondary runway, Runway 11/29, is 4,706 feet long. The primary runway is equipped with an ILS precision approach, and the field has on-site weather reporting. In 2008, the airport enplaned nearly 1,500 passengers and accommodated approximately 18,000 annual operations.

Great Lakes Airlines provides commercial air service through the FAA’s Essential Air Service Program. Great Lakes operates daily regional air service to Denver and Kansas City, which connects Great Bend to the rest of the world. Enterprise Rent-A-Car provides passengers with a link to the community by providing rental car services.

There is one fixed based operator, Centerline Aviation, that provides charter service, flight training, maintenance, aircraft rental, fuel, and many other services. In addition, the airport has a state-of-the-art self-service fueling system for both jet-A and avgas customers.

Great Bend Municipal Airport participates in the Doctors Outreach Program, which is designed to allow doctors to fly to the smaller communities to serve those patients that do not have easy access to medical facilities. Doctors based in Great Bend fly to these locations to visit patients on a regular basis. Additionally, Midwest Life Team is based at the airport and provides air ambulance services to residents of the community and region.

Southwest Kansas is an active farming and ranching region in the state. As such, Tony’s Aerial Spraying provides aerial application of fertilizers and pesticides on crops in the region. Tony’s Aerial Spraying is also a member of the Wildfire Aerial Suppression Program (WASP) in Kansas.