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.
Liberal Mid-America Regional Airport (LBL) is located in southwest Kansas a few miles from the Oklahoma state line in the city 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 Service airport. Commercial Service airports accommodate scheduled air carrier service as well as all general aviation aircraft.

LBL has two runways that accommodate a variety of aircraft including jet and general aviation aircraft. The primary runway, Runway 17/35, is 7,105 feet long and the secondary runway, Runway 04/22, is 5,721 feet long. The field has on-site weather reporting, and the primary runway is equipped with an ILS approach, both of which provide access to the airport during most weather conditions. The airport enplanes nearly 6,000 passengers and accommodates over 42,000 annual operations.

Liberal Mid-America Regional Airport (LBL) is home to the Mid-America Air Museum. The museum is the largest aerospace and aircraft museum in Kansas, with over 100 aircraft on display. The airport is also a base for one of five regional offices of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

PenAir has provided daily commercial air service to Denver through the FAA’s Essential Air Service Program. Special round trip charter service to Laughlin, Nevada has been another chapter in LBL’s record for commercial service. Hertz Rental Car provides passengers with a link to the community by offering rental car services.

There is one fixed based operator, Lyddon Aero Center, that provides fuel, flight training, maintenance, aircraft rental, and many other services. Midwest Life Team, an air ambulance operator, provides a high level of patient care to the citizens of the region. Floyd Aero is an aerial applicator located at the airport.