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.

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.
Scott City Municipal Airport is located approximately one mile west of the central business district of Scott City in western Kansas. The airport is included in the FAA’s National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), making it eligible to receive federal funds. Owned and operated by Scott City, the airport’s role within the Kansas Aviation System Plan is identified as a Business airport, which is intended to accommodate local business activities and general aviation users.

The airport’s primary runway is a 5,000-foot by 75-foot asphalt surface with non-precision instrument approaches to each end. A secondary 2,100-foot turf runway is also available for use. Scott City Aviation, the airport’s city-run fixed base operator, provides fuel services, aircraft parking, hangar storage, flight training, aircraft rental, aircraft charters, aircraft maintenance, and pilot supplies. Activities at the airport include agricultural spraying, business transport, emergency medical transport, medical doctor transport, environmental agencies, and aerial pipeline inspections.

The airport is home to Western Kansas Weather Modification, a cloud seeding operation that performs “weather modification” in order to reduce the damage from hail storms that typically move through western Kansas during the spring and summer months. The program, funded by Kansas, numerous counties, and ground water districts, uses a total of eight aircraft to carry out its operations.

The airport is also used for staging community events such as the popular Wings & Wheels in October. This event draws visitors from all over western Kansas and encompasses an aircraft fly-in and a car and motorcycle show.