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KDOT's Airspace Awareness Tool receives national award for engineering excellence

An innovative online software program that shows if a proposed tower or wind turbine would interfere with landings and take-offs at airports has won a prestigious award for the Kansas Department of Transportation

The Kansas Airspace Awareness Tool (KAAT), developed for the Kansas Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation by Burns and McDonnell engineering firm, has received the top Honor Award in the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) 2012 Engineering Excellence Awards competition.

Referred to as the "Academy Awards for engineering excellence," the prestigious award was accepted by KDOT Director of Aviation Ed Young this week during a formal ceremony in Washington, D.C. Several thousand projects from around the world were submitted, but only 24 projects were selected to receive awards at the ACEC ceremony.

Sixteen projects were given an Honor Award, seven the Grand Award and one the Grand Conceptor Award. The KAAT was first among the 16 Honor Award recipients. The top seven Grand Award winners all had a budget of over \$1 billion, while the KAAT was completed for just over a quarter of a million.

"It's certainly a humbling experience to see our project recognized among so many outstanding high impact projects from around the world," said Young. "It's a testament to the collaborative effort and hard work of everyone involved."

Collaboration on the project included the use of Eudora High School students and the Aircraft Owner and Pilots Association (AOPA) Airport Support Network volunteers to help beta test the program. Eudora students suggested one of the most innovative aspects of the program – the use of avatars to represent the item that is being proposed.

“The growth of the wind industry in Kansas pushed us toward developing a tool that would allow developers, planners and citizens to visualize airport airspace. We wanted to promote development that did not reduce the usability of the airport,” said Young said, “but along the way we determined that the tool could help us plan growth, more effectively talk about the importance of the airport and help in the early planning of everything from highways to industrial parks.”

The KDOT Airspace Awareness Tool was made possible by a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration. The tool was developed over 1½ years working with Burns and McDonnell. The airspace tool is available free to the public on the KDOT Aviation website at www.ksdot.org/divAviation.

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