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Air ambulance service now accessible to more Kansans, report shows

The percentage of Kansans living within 30 minutes of an airport that is accessible to air ambulance service has risen to 90 percent.

The increase, which is up from 86 percent in 2010, is documented in the Kansas Aviation System Plan Update of 2016. Increasing the number of airports accessible to air ambulance service is a goal of the Kansas Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation. Airport improvements such as runway upgrades and installation of instrument approach and weather systems are necessary to provide all-weather access for air ambulances.

Current airport projects scheduled for completion through 2017 will bring coverage to 92 percent. The ultimate goal is 94 percent coverage.

"These studies are important to fully understand the whole concept of where we're at and where we need to go to improve overall the aviation plan," said Aviation Director Merrill Atwater.

Another finding of the 2016 study shows that 55 percent of Kansans have access to commercial service in their cities, up from 32 percent in 2010.

"A comprehensive review like this naturally comes with mixed results between the time data are collected and when ready to be reported, but the job gets done by pointing us to key issues for our project reviews and managing state funding, especially

when partnering on a given project with the FAA,” said Dennis O’Connor, State and Federal Affairs Manager for the Aviation Division.

And, said O’Connor, “That’s exactly why air ambulance coverage is advancing steadily, because the 2010 study pointed to a priority that we incorporated with state project planning.”

The full report, which is required by the FAA, will be posted on the Kansas Airspace Portal, <http://ksaviationportal.ksdot.org/aviationportal/cesium.html>, today. It will also be posted to the KDOT Aviation website, <http://www.ksdot.org/divaviation/default.asp>.

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