

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commemorative statewide Air Tour to begin with April 1 ceremony in Onaga

The commemorative 2008 All Kansas Air Tour will officially begin its eight-day journey Tuesday, April 1, with a proclamation and plaque ceremony in Onaga beginning at 10 a.m. at the Charles Grutzmacher Municipal Airport.

A proclamation from Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will be read and the city of Onaga will be presented a plaque recognizing their involvement as the initial city in the event, which runs April 1-8 through 26 Kansas communities.

The statewide event is being held to commemorate the 1928 All Kansas Air Tour, which is credited with boosting the state's fledgling aviation industry 80 years ago. The tour is intended to raise awareness of aviation and its economic importance to the state. As many as 50 vintage and modern aircraft are expected to participate in the tour.

"Kansas is home to a \$7 billion general aviation industry," said Ed Young, Director of Aviation for the Kansas Department of Transportation. "Aviation is a major component of our transportation network with Kansas currently operating the 8th largest public-use airport system in the country."

In addition to promoting aviation, the 2008 tour will promote cultural and educational sites across the state. Air Tour stops include the Kansas Aviation Museum, Wichita, April 1; Mid-America Air Museum, Liberal, April 2; the Prairie Museum of Art

and History, Colby, April 3; the B-29 Memorial, Great Bend, April 3; the Eisenhower Museum, Abilene, April 4; the Combat Air Museum, Topeka, April 5; and the Fort Scott National Historic Site, April 6.

Communities participating in the tour include Onaga, Baldwin City, Garnett, McPherson, Benton, Wichita, Kingman, Liberal, Johnson City, Garden City, Scott City, Colby, Hays, Great Bend, Salina, Abilene, Manhattan, Atchison, Topeka, Lawrence, Paola, Fredonia, Ft. Scott, Independence, Augusta and El Dorado.

KDOT funds \$3 million in airport improvements annually and the state has seen dramatic improvements in air transportation since the inception of the Kansas Airport Improvement Program (KAIP).

This year, the percentage of Kansas runways rated “good” or better has increased to 83 – up from 49 in 1999 – in large part because of the KAIP. The program has funded 209 projects at 90 public-use airports in the past nine years.

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