

Regional Unmanned Aircraft Systems Strategic Framework

Mid-America Regional Council

September 2018



VISION STATEMENT

The Kansas City region is drone-friendly and a proactive leader in the safe operation of unmanned aircraft systems. Through strong partnerships with public and private agencies, the region strives to create a policy and regulatory environment for UAS that supports high quality economic development, urban planning, emergency services, public safety and related public services. The region actively promotes innovation, training and education for professional UAS operators and general guidance for recreational users.

What are UAS?

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), sometimes called drones, are aircraft without a human pilot onboard — instead, UAS are controlled from an operator on the ground.

ACTION STEPS

MARC will play a coordinating role in advancing the following actions:

A CONVENE REGIONAL UAS STAKEHOLDERS

- Foster a working relationship with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- Establish a permanent UAS leadership group.
- Facilitate partnerships between various jurisdictions, departments, disciplines and private entities.

B ENABLE PUBLIC AGENCY ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF UAS TECHNOLOGIES

- Build trust through education and transparency with local elected officials and the general public.
- Develop local UAS programs that focus on:
 - Economic development, such as construction and infrastructure inspection.
 - Public service, such as conducting searches (especially where danger exists for humans), collecting data, photographing areas and limited-scope short-term surveillance.

Congress has provided the FAA with exclusive authority to regulate aviation safety, the efficiency of the navigable airspace, and air traffic control, among other things. State and local governments are not permitted to regulate any type of aircraft operations, such as flight paths or altitudes, or the navigable airspace.

C COLLECT, COMPILE AND SHARE DATA AND EXAMPLES

- Create an environment conducive to sharing successful and unsuccessful UAS practices and offer platforms or forums for sharing knowledge, best practices and lessons learned.
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify the greatest needs or concerns for local governments.
- Find ways to test products and services on a small scale before implementing on a regional level.

D ESTABLISH CLEAR STANDARDS, DEFINITIONS AND POLICIES

- Work with local agencies to determine jurisdictional limits of local policies.
- Explore model ordinances and policies that do not interfere with FAA regulations.
- Promote consistent and concise communication standards for UAS terms and concepts.

E EDUCATE AND TRAIN PUBLIC AGENCIES

- Develop a beginner's manual for using UAS and forming a UAS program.
- Explore and facilitate shared service opportunities such as outsourcing, consulting, cooperative purchasing, employee training and other common activities.
- Educate the public on differences between FAA rules and regulations for commercial and hobbyist operators.
- Support and promote high quality training to ensure safe, legal, and responsible UAS operation and program implementation.
- Continually monitor developments in UAS for opportunities to promote local and regional interests.

BACKGROUND

During the months of May, June and July 2018, the Mid-America Regional Council hosted a series of facilitated planning meetings to discuss the potential development of a regional unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) framework. The topic of UAS is important to the Kansas City region. In response to significant and continually growing interest from various stakeholder groups, including the MARC Board of Directors, MARC staff has worked to identify and respond to needs in this area. In June 2017, a survey of more than 400 regional stakeholders found:

- An increase in the use of UAS by public agencies — 27 percent currently use UAS. Of those not using UAS, more than two-thirds are interested.
- A strong need for education and training on regulations, policy guidance and information on best practices.

This framework will develop actionable steps that MARC and the region can implement to address opportunities and challenges associated with UAS.

The initiative was led by Greg Williams, founder of the Regional Drone Users Group and captain with the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department, and Larry Peet, acting executive director of the Johnson County Airport Commission. The leadership team members represented a blend of city and county managers, information technology specialists, university representatives, local airport officials, public works employees, public safety and zoning/codes administrators, attorneys and legal experts.

The scope of work and purpose for the planning meetings included:

1. Create a leadership group that can build capacity and provide sustainable commitment.
2. Create a regional strategic framework that includes a vision, values and guiding principles.
3. Build the key components of a first-year UAS work plan.



VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

To be successful in these endeavors, it is important that new connections be made while maintaining strong working relationships based on the following values and principles:

- Trust
- Respect.
- Safety.
- Partnership.
- Inclusion.
- Innovation.