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Kentucky to Partner on \$500,000 Federal Grant to Study Future of Electric Aircraft Charging at Airports in Appalachia

Appalachian Regional Commission's ARISE grant to focus on electric infrastructure needs at 36 general aviation airports, half of airports are in Kentucky

Frankfort, KY. (Aug. 16, 2024) — Kentucky is proud to partner on preparing general aviation airports in Appalachia for the future of electric aircraft thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) awarded to Ohio University.

The state of Kentucky, Ohio and North Carolina, North Carolina State University, local airport officials and researchers are all grant partners. The team will work to evaluate technology needs at [36 general aviation airports](#) -- half of which are in Kentucky. The grant also aims to expand the already vital economic and public service role of aviation in the region.

“Kentucky is already the electric vehicle battery production capital of the world, and by participating in this project we’re working to become a leader in the aircraft industry of the future,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “By bringing new jobs, technologies and industries to Kentucky we’re making sure our children never have to leave home to chase their dreams.” The Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE) grant is a product of the historic federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to strengthen economic opportunities through multi-state collaborative projects.

Researchers at the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service (GVS) and the Institute of Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) of North Carolina State University will spearhead the yearlong project to identify the utilities and charging infrastructure required to serve electric aircraft at 36 general aviation airports located in

Appalachian counties in Kentucky, Ohio and North Carolina. This information will provide models for financing and implementing necessary infrastructure improvements at general aviation airports in the participating states, and across Appalachia.

Of Kentucky's 58 public use airports, 18 general aviation airports will be included in the project. A list of all participating airports is provided below. In Ohio, 14 general aviation airports will be a part of the project and four will be included in North Carolina.

As the project's director, Brent Lane of Ohio University observed, "Appalachia's more than 230 public general aviation airports must be prepared to support the operational needs of electric aviation, or the region will lose the benefits it offers."

Aviation is already important in Appalachia, but aviation is changing as a new generation of sustainable electric aircraft is emerging. These innovative aircraft, ranging from drones to passenger airplanes, offer promising applications including delivering emergency medical supplies and cargo, public safety services, and business and regional transportation. Most of this activity will occur at the numerous smaller general aviation airports which, though not offering commercial flights, play important roles in their local economies.

Since 2020, the Beshear Administration has invested \$69 million in local, general aviation airports for capital and maintenance projects to improve airport infrastructure. Examples of projects include runway overlays, new lighting, and apron expansions. In 2023, Gov. Beshear joined local officials to celebrate the opening of the 58th public use airport in Gallatin County.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The announced funding was via ARC's Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE), which aims to drive large-scale, regional economic transformation through multi-state collaborative projects across Appalachia. The ARISE funding opportunity drives large-scale economic transformation through collaborative multi-state projects. Since January 2023, ARC has used funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to invest over \$70.8 million in ARISE projects that will strengthen Appalachian business and industry, as well as support the development of new economic opportunities across the region.

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region, including 54 counties in Kentucky. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

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