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New deals push local drone efforts forward

Dayton-Springfield plan targets jobs, education efforts.

By Michael Cooper

The Ohio/Indiana Unmanned Aerial Systems Center and Test Complex reached agreements with Wilmington Air Park and the Springfield-Beckley Municipal Airport in an attempt to bring jobs and research and development opportunities to area businesses and colleges.

The agreement with Springfield was reached last week, while the partnership between Wilmington Air Park and the UASC was formalized Monday.

"It's just another step in the right direction here as we try and build the infrastructure and the systems to support attracting this industry," Springfield Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director Tom Franzen said. "It formalizes the arrangement that we'll kind of adhere to the policies that come out of the UAS headquarters."

The Springfield airport, located two miles south of Springfield on Ohio 794, currently has four to five active Certificates of Authorization (COAs), which grant public entities like cities and universities permission to fly unmanned aircraft under specific conditions.

Sinclair Community College has three COAs at Wilmington Air Park and the Springfield airport that include unmanned aircraft made by Spear, Altavian and Vireo, according to Sinclair spokesman Adam Murka.

Springfield is home to several UAS stakeholders, including Clark State Community College, which is working with the city to build 10 UAS hangars at the airport for approximately \$500,000. The school is also creating a UAS precision agriculture program.

The airport is also home to SelecTech Geospatial, which builds UAS, and the 178th Fighter Wing, which flies UAS for the Ohio Air National Guard.

Kevin Carver, executive director of the Clinton County Port Authority, said the agreement between Wilmington and the UASC shows the dedication Ohio has to the aerospace industry.

“The Ohio/Indiana collaborative efforts reinforce the region’s commitment to being a major player in the evolving UAS industry,” Carver said.

Wilmington Air Park is owned and operated by Clinton County Port Authority. The 1,900-acre Air Park features two parallel runways capable of landing almost any aircraft.

The Ohio/Indiana UASC is a joint venture between the two states. Both states signed a six-year memorandum of understanding to share airspace and test ranges last year.

The UAS market is projected to be an \$82 billion industry and will attempt to create 100,000 jobs over the next 10 years, according to a media release.