

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM



*and*

MUSEUM OF THE KANSAS NATIONAL GUARD



## Transient Guest Tax Application

August 14, 2015

### Project:

## One-Time Grant Way Finding Sign

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## **Application for an Allocation of a One-time Grant from Transient Guest Tax Funds**

The **Combat Air Museum** and **Museum of the Kansas National Guard**, both situated at the Topeka Regional Airport in southeast Topeka/Shawnee County, are jointly applying for a **one-time grant of \$5,000** from the Transient Guest Tax Funds to erect a way finding sign on westbound Highway I-70, close to the City. The Kansas Dept. of Transportation has put a hold on all new brown way finding signage for the foreseeable future.

Preamble: With the future of Heartland Park in some question, it will be incumbent on Visit Topeka and the City Council to help ensure that whatever racetrack/entertainment development occurring southeast of the City becomes successful, both for the future of the STAR Bond repayment and for the attraction of as many additional/new tourist visitors as possible. Topeka tourism should be helping ensure that motorists have some encouragement to explore tourist locations in southeastern Topeka.

Two major historical Museums (*see attached TripAdvisor.com rankings for Topeka tourist locations*) are situated in the southeastern area of the City/County, in close proximity to the Heartland Park Development zone. Currently all of the road signage along Highway I-70, coming from Kansas City and States to the east of Topeka, is almost exclusively for attractions in central or north Topeka. Along westbound I-70 between Kansas City and Topeka there are NO way finding signs for either Museum and only one for a southeastern attraction, Lake Shawnee.

Combat Air Museum and the Museum of the Kansas National Guard have worked hand-in-glove in the past with Heartland Park to give race goers two alternative facilities to visit before, during and after National and other Racing events. Prominent signage at Heartland Park helps direct out of town race going visitors to Combat Air Museum and CAM volunteers, in turn, direct visitors to the Museum of the Kansas National Guard.

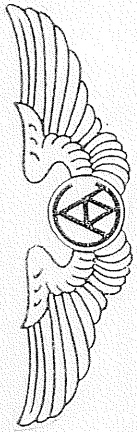
Neither Museum has the wherewithal to fund a significant sign on west I-70, directing traffic to the South Topeka exit for easy access to these Museums.

1. Project: Construction and erection of a joint sign to be placed on private property along west Highway I-70 about 3 miles before the East Topeka and South Topeka fork for west bound travellers from northeastern Kansas and, importantly, Kansas City. There are no way finding signs for either Museum on Highway I-70 westbound from Kansas City and points west (Missouri, other States etc.). Many I-70 travellers currently take the East Topeka exit on their way through Topeka to western Kansas/Colorado. The Kansas Dept. of Transportation has put a hold on all new brown way finding signage for the foreseeable future and thus there is nowhere for the two Museums to obtain funding for signage from this source. If motorists saw a sign for the two Museums before they made a decision about which route to take through Topeka, a portion of these travellers would take the South Topeka exit and stop to explore the two Museums before moving on through to eastern Kansas/Colorado. Currently close to 20% of visitors to both Museums indicate that they have come to the Museums as a result of road signage. Combat Air

Museum has obtained permission to place signage from the owner of private property alongside west Highway I-70 about Mile Marker 187.

2. Design and construction of a joint sign, County Administrative Fees and location erection costs amount to \$5,000.
3. Neither Museum has funds available for advertising or sign construction.
4. A one-time grant of \$5,000. This is not an ongoing annual request for TGT funding, just a one-time request.
5. Design, construction and erection of a joint sign on private property along westbound Highway I-70 about 3 miles outside of the East/South Topeka fork on private property.
6. As most visitors to either Museum usually take between one and two hours to tour each facility, and because both Museums are situated at the Topeka Regional Airport, we find that visitors to one Museum are most often attracted to tour both. Therefore is reasonable to expect a visit from each carload to last for a total of between two and four hours for the two locations. At three to four hours it is almost a certainty that a lunch or meal in Topeka restaurants becomes a necessity for the tourist. Both Museums have rack brochures and Topeka tourism magazines that feature all the restaurants available to visitors to the City. In addition both Museums attract a significant number of travellers from overseas countries and many of them will proceed on to other City tourist attractions, most likely necessitating at least a one or two overnight stay in Topeka hotels.
7. More visitors stopping for tourism spending, meals and hotel stays.
8. The signage can be constructed within one to two months, the County Approval process can take up to 6 weeks and, once approval is given, the sign can be erected within a week of approval. From approval date to Project completion is estimated at 3-4 months
9. With an increase in the stopover tourism traffic from this major Highway, and potential for these stopovers to be extensive, additional hotel and restaurant usage will undoubtedly result. To what extent is hard to hypothetically quantify.
10. Overnight stays will be enhanced from the additional overseas and outside State travellers stopping overnight in Topeka.
11. The combined signage will possible look like the mockup (see attached).

It is entirely possible that future development of tourism and/or economic areas could spread to the southeastern areas of the City/County, especially if the City works closely with any future owner of Heartland Park to develop this area and liquidate the STAR Bonds.



**COMBAT  
AIR MUSEUM**

**KANSAS  
NATIONAL GUARD  
MUSEUM**

*• USE SOUTH TOPEKA EXIT •*

**Website TripAdvisor.com Ranking of Top Things To Do In Topeka**

**All Below Ranked Out Of 46 Sites in Topeka**

1. Kansas State Capitol Building
2. **Lake Shawnee** (*southeastern Topeka*)
3. Kansas Museum of History
4. First Presbyterian Church
5. Gage Park
6. Kansas Children's Discovery Center
7. Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Site
8. **Combat Air Museum** (*southeastern Topeka/Shawnee County*)
9. Ward Meade Park
10. **Ted Ensley Gardens** (*southeastern Topeka*)
14. **Heartland Park** (*southeastern Topeka*)
16. **Museum of the Kansas National Guard** (*southeastern Topeka/Shawnee County*)

**Note: 5 locations out of the top 16 are located in southeastern Topeka/Shawnee County**



## **Combat Air Museum: Background Information:**

The Topeka-based Combat Air Museum, originally formed in 1977 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational institution, provides a valuable national location for tourism. The availability of such a historically significant aviation museum in northeastern Kansas contributes significantly to the quality of life for the community in the Topeka and Shawnee County region.

The principal objective for the museum is to provide educational opportunities for the general public to learn about the aviation history of the several armed forces of the United States of America (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard).

The Combat Air Museum offers classes on the theory of flight and aviation history to grade and middle school students, ages 8–12 four times a year, during the Spring Break and Summer Vacations.

Over 10,000 visitors pass through the museum every year to view the collection of close to 40 military aircraft, numerous exhibits and artifacts. Each year roughly 6,500 visitors are from Kansas (including 2,500 from Shawnee County), 3,300 from the remaining 49 States, Washington DC and Puerto Rico and, importantly for “heads on beds”, 200 - 250 visitors are from countries outside of the continental U.S.A. Countries range from all in the European Community, to the Asia/Pacific region and South America but, significantly, the Museum also attracts many visitors from the old Soviet Bloc countries as the Museum holds 3 MiG aircraft ranging from the Mig-15 and MiG-17 (Korean War) to the MiG-21 (Vietnam War).

At this time, the museum is operated by a nine member volunteer Board of Directors (Chairman, Deputy Chairman & seven member directors), (only) two paid employees (the Curator and a part-time Office Manager) and 28-30 active volunteer members. All the rest of the Museum operational activities are achieved by volunteer members. Volunteer hours are tracked and, in 2014, over 8,500 hours were recorded. At a conservative \$10-15/hr, the intrinsic value of such volunteer hours would be around \$100,000. A great many of these volunteers also dedicate hours towards other volunteer activities, in and around Topeka, such as at Meals on Wheels, the Kansas Historical Society and at various church denominations in the city/county area.

Membership of the Combat Air Museum is non-discriminatory and open to the general public, regardless of race or national origin, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation. Family membership is strongly encouraged as is active participation of members in all Museum activities.

The Museum receives no Federal, State, County or City operational funding, other than a very modest portion of transient guest bed tax during the years 2007– 2009 which was committed entirely to advertising the museum and its facilities. The rest of the operating funds employed by the museum are raised solely through visitor entrance fees, membership fees, donations, gift store sales and periodic local fund raising events. These fund raisers allow the Museum to keep its doors open throughout the ‘slow’ winter months, when attendance drops off significantly.

Over the 10-year period 2005–2014, the Museum has achieved a break-even on its operating income and expenses while raising funds of approximately \$65,000 for major hangar siding repairs and renovation. Museum volunteers are currently on a fund-raising campaign to raise another \$33,000 to complete this hangar restoration effort.

## **Background Information**

# **Museum of the Kansas National Guard**

**125 SE Airport E. Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66619**

The Museum of the Kansas National Guard, which opened in 1997, is located on a 6.5 acre plot at the entrance to Forbes Field, Topeka. Its mission is to preserve and present the militia heritage of the Kansas Army and Air National Guard. The Museum is home to the 35<sup>th</sup> Division Museum. The 35<sup>th</sup> Division is a historical National Guard unit which fought in WW I, WW II, Vietnam, and the Global War on Terrorism. It is a recognized U. S. Army Museum, and draws visitors from all over who are interested in viewing and researching military history.

The Museum has 36 pieces of military equipment outside, including 4 airplanes, 5 helicopters, 5 tanks, and 8 artillery pieces, as well as trucks, jeeps, and other equipment. It has 140 inside exhibits, including a M\*A\*S\*H "Swamp" exhibit, a Weapons Gallery, 5 dioramas, and exhibits on Kansas Army and Air National Guard units. It has two research libraries, and a small collection of military art. It has a Conference Room used at nights, on weekends, and during the summer by various community groups and by the STARBASE National Guard youth math-science-robotics-rocketry program four days a week during the school year.

The Museum sponsors various community events, such as the AVTT Vietnam Veterans Traveling Wall; the "Remembering Our Heroes" traveling exhibit of Kansans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan; the annual Heartland Military Day of reenactments, equipment exhibits, presentations, and band concerts; and the quarterly luncheons which feature a variety of entertaining and educational programs. The Museum is open 10 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday.

The Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization operated by a 17-member Board of Directors. It does not have an admission charge, but operates entirely on donations, fundraisers, membership sales, memorials, and engraved brick sales. It has no paid staff, but has over 45 individuals who volunteer as hosts and as maintenance workers each month. Electricity, gas, and water for the Museum are paid by the Kansas National Guard because of programs they house in the Museum, such as STARBASE, the Adjutant General's Command Historian, and the 102d Military History Detachment. All other expenses are paid by the Museum, which has an average annual operating budget of approximately \$60,000.

Museum memberships and all programs are non-discriminatory and open to anyone, regardless of race or national origin, gender, religion, age, or sexual orientation.

Visitor attendance over the last four years has been 11,124, 14,105, 13,299, and 16,544. In addition, there was an estimated 10,000+ additional visitors for the AVTT Vietnam Traveling Wall in 2014. Attendance for the first seven months of 2015 was 9,955. An average 10 percent of visitors are from out of state and an average of 42 percent are from outside of Topeka. International visitors average over 160 each year.