



Economic Impact Study
Big Sandy Airport
2026



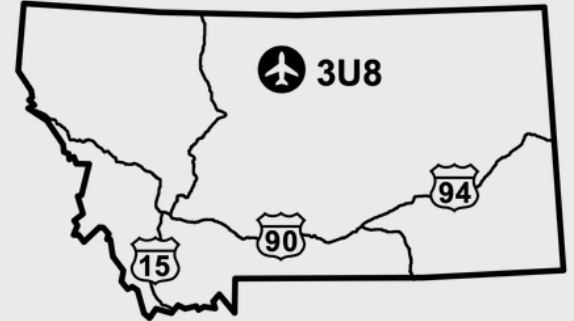
MONTANA
Department of Transportation



ZENITH
ECONOMICS

Big Sandy Airport Impact

Big Sandy Airport is a public-use general aviation airport located south of Big Sandy, in Chouteau County in north-central Montana. The airfield features a primary paved runway of 3,570 feet along with a turf crosswind runway, and handles approximately 800 annual general aviation operations. Airport activities include recreational flying, agricultural spraying, search and rescue, freight and perishable goods shipping, flight training, emergency medical transport, corporate and business aviation, law enforcement, aerial photography and surveying, aerial inspections, wildland firefighting, and military exercises. The facility hosts an annual fly-in, an airport Easter egg hunt, and community airplane rides. The airport serves as a critical link for hospital flights and agricultural operations in Montana's Golden Triangle region.



Total Economic Impact on Montana



Jobs
2



Economic Impact
\$267 Thousand



Payroll
\$85 Thousand

Qualitative Impacts

In addition to generating substantial economic impacts, this airport supports a variety of harder to quantify “Qualitative Impacts” that support critical statewide safety and enterprise. The 2026 Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Airports Study documents the following non-inclusive list of qualitative impacts associated with the airport:



Aerial Firefighting
Supports Wildland Firefighting Operations



Agriculture Support
Supports Agriculture through Aerial Application



Emergency Medical Aviation
Supports Air Ambulance Operations



Perishable Goods Shipping
Enables Time-Sensitive Transport of Perishable Goods



Aerial Surveying & Photography
Supports aerial surveying, inspections, and photography



VIP/Visitor Gateway
Serves as Gateway for High-Profile Visitors and Tourism

Source: Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Airports.

Montana Airports Support Our State



Jobs
39,400



Economic Impact
\$6.4 Billion



Payroll
\$2.4 Billion

Montana's airport system functions as a critical component of the state's transportation and economic infrastructure, enabling connectivity across a large and geographically dispersed landscape. Through scheduled commercial service and general aviation activity, airports provide access between Montana communities and regional, national, and international markets, supporting passenger travel, freight movement, and time-sensitive operations that cannot be efficiently served by surface transportation alone.

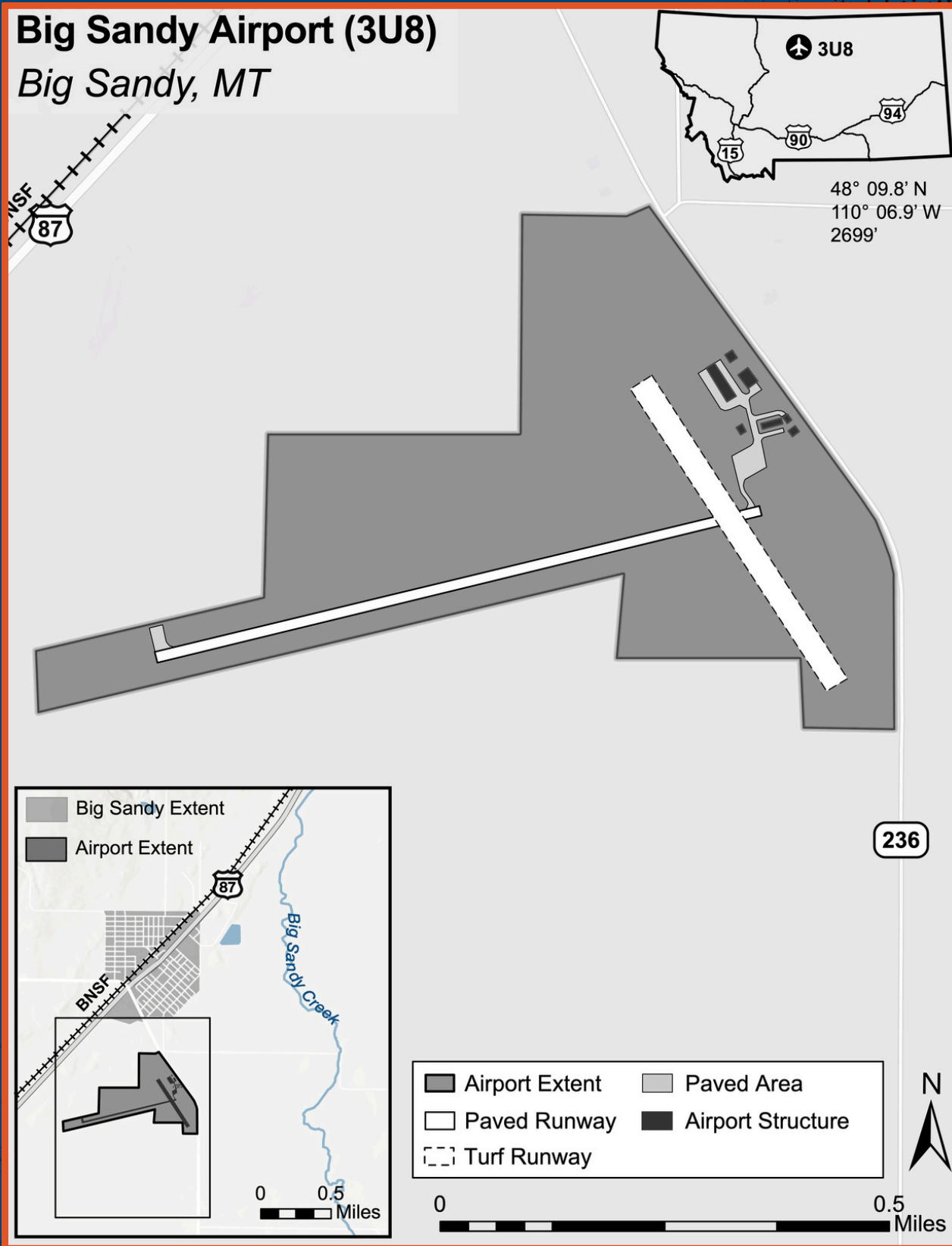
Beyond mobility, Montana's airports support a broad range of economic activity that contributes to employment, income generation, and business operations throughout the state. Aviation-related enterprises, on-airport and nearby businesses, visitor spending associated with air travel, and ongoing investment in airport facilities collectively generate economic activity at the local, regional, and statewide levels. These effects extend across multiple sectors, including tourism, healthcare, construction, professional services, and natural resource industries.

To document both the economic contributions and broader community functions of the state's aviation system, the Montana Department of Transportation undertook a comprehensive, statewide evaluation of Montana's airports. The **2026 Montana Statewide Economic Impact of Aviation** study examines the full scope of airport-related activity, including aviation and non-aviation businesses, visitor spending, capital investment, and secondary economic effects, while also identifying the specific roles individual airports play in supporting residents, businesses, and critical services across Montana.



Big Sandy Airport (3U8)

Big Sandy, MT



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