**Abstract****:**

Many studies have been conducted to examine the direct effects of airports on local economic development, however, there is little solid evidence on spatial spillover effects and much less in the context of China’s airport system. To fill this gap, this paper analyzed the spatial spillover effects of China main hub airports on economic development. The results indicated that air passenger traffic, air cargo shipment and flight frequency can induce positive and significant spillover effects on the economic development of all other neighboring cities connected through airport network. The total effects proved to be underestimated by non-spatial models. Other things being equal, increasing flight frequency of existing air services has a greater impact on GDP compared with expanding air services to new destinations. This study contributes to the literature by presenting new evidence on the spatial spillover effects of airports on economic development in Chinese cities.

Keywords: airports, economic development, spatial econometrics model, spillover effects, China

JEL Classification: R12; R40; C51; C31; C33