

January XX, 2020

Steve Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Dickson:

I am writing regarding the progress of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) efforts to safely integrate Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, into the national airspace. UAS technology can provide a variety of benefits including public safety, search and rescue, and breaking down distances to our rural communities. However, this integration must be done safely and responsibly, with the proper guardrails. That is why I made this area a priority as Congress considered the 2018 FAA Reauthorization legislation and worked to include multiple UAS safety provisions into the final bill. Given the recent press reports that highlight unsafe drone use, such as those in Colorado and Nebraska¹, I am committed to continuing to work with the FAA on how we move ahead with the necessary safety regulations to utilize this emerging technology appropriately.

As you well know, the FAA recently announced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to implement UAS Remote Identification. The rule will require drones to implement a remote ID system, which will make it possible for third parties such as law enforcement to track them and take action if they are operated in an unsafe manner. Remote ID is a critical part of ensuring safety in our airspace, but many other UAS-related provisions passed as part of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 must be fully and promptly implemented. Full UAS integration is vital for maintaining our global competitiveness, growing our economy, and ensuring incidents such as recent sightings of unclaimed drones in the U.S. do not pose a threat to Americans.

For these reasons, I am requesting that you expeditiously advance and provide information on progress of the following sections of the Act that will further go to address needed safety surrounding UAS technology:

1. **Sec. 343. Unmanned aircraft test ranges** - Reauthorizes and enhances the utilization of the seven existing UAS test ranges until September 30, 2023. This Sec. updates the FAA's authority with respect to the test ranges, first authorized in 2012, by more clearly directing research priorities, improving coordination with the FAA, and enhancing protections for proprietary information to encourage more fruitful engagement with the private sector.

¹ 'It's Creepy': Unexplained Drones Are Swarming by Night Over Colorado
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/01/us/drones-FAA-colorado-nebraska.html>

2. **Sec. 376. Plan for full operational capability of unmanned aircraft systems traffic management** - Directs the FAA, in consultation with other Federal agencies as appropriate, to develop a plan to allow for the implementation of UAS traffic management (UTM) services. As part of the implementation plan, this Section directs the FAA to take specific actions, including developing safety standards to permit, authorize, or allow the use of UTM services and to outline the roles and responsibilities of industry and government in establishing UTM services.
3. **Sec. 369. Applications for designation.** - Amends Section 2209 of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016 by establishing rulemaking deadline of March 31, 2019 for rules related to drone flights around critical infrastructure and including “railroad facilities” as an example of critical infrastructure and therefore eligible to petition the FAA to prohibit UAS operation in close proximity.
4. **Sec. 364. U.S. Counter-UAS system review of interagency coordination processes** - Requires the FAA, in consultation with government agencies authorized to operate counter-unmanned aircraft system (C-UAS) systems, to review interagency coordination, standards for the authorized Federal use of these systems and to report to Congress.
5. **Sec. 631. Community and Technical College centers of excellence in small-unmanned aircraft system technology training.** - Directs the Department of Transportation, in consultation with the Departments of Education and Labor, to establish a process to designate consortia of public, 2-year institutions of higher education as Community and Technical College Centers of Excellence in Small Unmanned Aircraft System Technology Training.

All of these provisions are important to the safe integration of UAS into the national airspace, but I want to draw special attention to Section 631, which directs the Department of Transportation, in consultation with the Departments of Education and Labor, to establish a process to designate consortia of public, 2-year institutions of higher education as Community and Technical College Centers of Excellence in Small Unmanned Aircraft System Technology Training. Workforce development is an especially crucial part of the success of our nation in leading the globe on this technology, and I am hopeful that your agency will make swift progress in implementing this section of the law to ensure that our UAS industry does not fall behind its international competitors.

Please provide a response to these questions by February 21st, 2020. I appreciate the FAA’s work on these issues and look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,