



Living Mobility

by Mobility & Transportation

Living Mobility is Inclusive Spotlight on drone delivery services

In conversation with Lisa Ellman, partner

Living Mobility is inclusive. Commercial drone delivery and Urban Air Mobility will increase mobility options, expand service accessibility and ultimately improve communities. In times of crisis, drone-enabled accessibility is not only a matter of convenience but also a life-saving tool critical to medical care. Lisa Ellman discusses the societal benefits of drone and Urban Air Mobility operations and some of the relevant policy issues.

Why are Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Urban Air Mobility (UAM) so valuable to the mobility and transportation industry?

Ellman: First, it is important to understand that Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) refers to the aircraft, communication links and ground control equipment. UAS is often used interchangeably with small drones. To be precise, the aircraft itself is called an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). Urban Air Mobility (UAM) refers to passenger or cargo-carrying aerial vehicles that are usually operated without an onboard human pilot.

Collectively, UAS and UAM represent an opportunity to reduce congestion and advance sustainable aviation technologies. In this way, the mobility and transportation industry can capitalize on industry disruption by embracing innovation.

What are current and future use cases for UAS?

Ellman: With UAS, industry and other stakeholders can increase mobility options, expand service accessibility and ultimately improve communities. Commercial drones or UAS have been used for safe and efficient delivery of medicines, groceries and other essential goods. For example, a drone was used to deliver a donor kidney to surgeons. Drones have also been critical to search-and-rescue missions, law enforcement operations and in response to natural disasters.

Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, drones are being used for contactless delivery of medical supplies. Manufacturers of personal protective equipment are partnering with drone companies to distribute supplies to help medical workers.

But the societal benefits of drone deliveries extend beyond health care and will impact daily life. Drones are being used for contactless deliveries from coffee shops, cafes, libraries as well as pharmacies – making social distancing a little easier. Commercial drone delivery creates new accessibility options for homebound individuals or residents of rural areas. Future use cases will likely continue to extend the physical reach and scope of services.

What legal and regulatory considerations should the mobility and transportation industry keep in mind for future UAM and UAS cases?

Ellman: We must acknowledge that policy lags behind innovation. Historically, this lag has often resulted in regulations that impede technological development. Understanding this general trend in policy development is important for industry to keep in mind because it focuses the industry on the importance of helping government to understand the technology it seeks to regulate.

Another important concept to consider is the dynamic and varied nature of drone policy.

In the United States, federal rules govern the safety of drone operations in all states and provide baseline operational requirements. More stringent regulations and certification requirements apply to drones conducting air carrier (i.e., package delivery) operations. States and localities typically regulate privacy and property rights.

In the European Union (EU), the EU Implementing Regulation 2019/947 provides new rules for drone operations including aerial categories. These rules will partially replace domestic laws for EU member states when the measure enters into force in December 2020. This effort is an important step towards harmonizing different legal frameworks for drone operations that currently exist among EU member states.

The speed at which technology advances and the dynamic nature of regulatory policy highlight the need for industry to work with all levels of government towards policies benefitting both industry and the public. For example, the Commercial Drone Alliance is an independent non-profit organization that works with the government to develop such policies and educate the public.

Public understanding of the benefits of these novel technologies is critical to their advancement and enables the evolution of the mobility and transportation industry. Prioritizing public education bridges knowledge gaps and engenders consumer trust. In this way, education supports both industry growth and public benefit.

Featured Speaker



Lisa Ellman

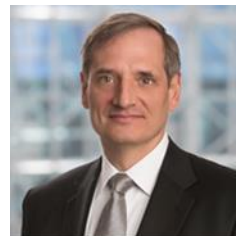
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