



Trump administration announces first round of UAS Integration Pilot Program Participants

May 9, 2018

In a major development for the commercial unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drone) industry, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao today announced the first round of participants in the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) much-anticipated Unmanned Aircraft System Integration Pilot Program (IPP).

The emerging commercial UAS industry benefits the public in real and profound ways. Yet while the technology has moved quickly ahead, policymaking has lagged behind the technology in the United States. In an effort to move UAS policymaking forward, the White House announced plans last fall for the UAS IPP. The IPP seeks to accelerate the safe integration of UAS into the National Airspace System (NAS) and to foster the development of new UAS technologies for use in a wide range of commercial industries.

The selectees announced today were drawn from a highly-competitive pool of over 200 tribal, state, and local governments. States and localities from every region in the country submitted applications showcasing industry partnerships seeking to satisfy the growing demand from Americans across the country for UAS use in support of disaster response, infrastructure inspection, package delivery, and much more.

Regardless of whether or not particular applications succeeded to become a formal pilot program, we anticipate that the public-private partnerships formed to support IPP applications will provide great benefits to the American people.

The initial round of selected participants is:

1. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
2. Lee County Mosquito Control District in Florida
3. University of Alaska at Fairbanks
4. City of San Diego, California
5. North Carolina Department of Transportation
6. Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority

7. City of Reno, Nevada
8. North Dakota Department of Transportation
9. Kansas Department of Transportation
10. Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership

We need to wait and see what actually comes out of the Pilot Program, and the lasting success of the program will of course depend on its implementation. However, today's announcement, and the administration's focus on expanding UAS operations in the NAS, is a positive development for the commercial UAS industry as whole.

Here's a brief look at what we currently know and don't know about the UAS IPP.

What we know

- **IPP Program objectives.** The three primary objectives of the Pilot Program are to:
 - **test and evaluate** various models of state, local, and tribal government involvement in the development and enforcement of federal regulations for UAS operations;
 - encourage UAS owners and operators to **develop and safely test** new and innovative UAS concepts of operations; and
 - **inform the development** of future federal guidelines and regulatory decisions on UAS operations nationwide.
- **Move beyond Part 107.** The IPP presents an opportunity to push UAS policy boundaries forward to evaluate and enable a host of advanced operational concepts, including flights beyond the pilot's visual line of sight, over people, and at night. This is necessary for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop broad rulemakings authorizing operations beyond the scope of current rules.
- **Waivers and/or Exemptions still required.** While participants in the IPP will receive special attention from the FAA, UAS operators will still need to obtain waivers and/or exemptions to authorize operations that go beyond the bounds of what is currently permitted under the Federal Aviation Regulations. Similar to the prior FAA Pathfinder Program, the idea is that participants in the IPP will expend resources for the public good, while receiving expedited consideration of exemptions, authorizations, and waivers from FAA regulations.
- **Numbers.** Ten state, local and tribal government entities have been selected for participation in the UAS IPP so far. Each of these selectees has partnered with varying numbers of private industry partners. The FAA will consider new applicants on a rolling basis up to one year before the Program is scheduled to terminate in October 2020.

What we don't know

- **Future numbers.** While there is no maximum on the number of participants in the IPP, we do not yet know if and when additional participants will be selected for participation in the IPP.
- **Adding new private industry partners.** As part of the initial application process, the ten selectees identified private sector entities, such as UAS operators, service providers, and manufacturers, to develop and test new and innovative UAS operations and concepts. There

will likely be many other private sector entities that seek to partner with selected participants. At this point, it is not clear how new industry partners will be added to the IPP.

- **Timelines for regulatory approvals.** While it is clear that the FAA will prioritize the review of waiver/exemption applications for expanded UAS operations conducted under the IPP, it is not yet clear how quickly those approvals will occur.

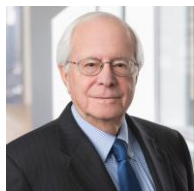
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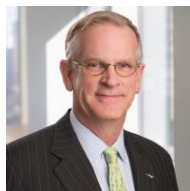
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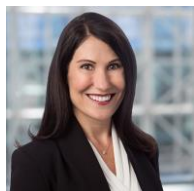
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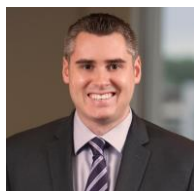
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