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## **Secretary Elaine L. Chao and DOT Officials Present Details of U.S. Drone Integration Pilot Program**

*Department Encourages Local, State, and Tribal Governments to Complete a Notice of Intent*

WASHINGTON – Joined by hundreds of drone operators, industry leaders, members of the public, law enforcement and first responders, and local, state, tribal and federal officials at Department Headquarters, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao announced today further details of the Department's new Drone Integration Pilot Program. The program follows a [directive](#) from President Donald J. Trump to initiate a pilot program to safely test and validate advanced operations through various partnerships across the country with oversight by the FAA.

U.S. DOT officials have put on display a Federal Register [notice](#) laying out the timeframe, requirements, and goals of the new program, which will pair local, state, and tribal entities with private sector players in the drone industry to develop and deploy new operational concepts that are not currently in widespread use. The key first step in the program is for government officials to complete a Notice of Intent, signifying their intention to complete a full program application.

Secretary Elaine L. Chao told attendees the program application and deployment process will move quickly because a key priority for DOT is encouraging innovation in the drone industry while maintaining safety for the communities involved.

"The Drone pilot program will accelerate the safe integration of drones into our airspace by creating new partnerships between local governments, the FAA, and private drone operators," said Secretary Chao. "These partnerships will allow local communities to experiment with new technologies like package delivery, emergency drone inspections, and more, on terms that work for them and in ways that support a unified and safe airspace."

Applicants will have **20** days from the date of publication of the Notice in the Federal Register to complete a Notice of Intent, followed by the requirement that they complete an application through the FAA/UAS Portal within 57 days of the publication in the Federal Register. Within 180 days, initial program applicants who receive approval could begin deploying drones under the limitations coordinated and agreed to with the FAA. The program will last for three years.

The program will help tackle the most significant challenges in integrating drones into the national airspace while reducing risks to public safety and security. The program is designed to provide

greater regulatory certainty and stability to local governments and communities, UAS owners and operators who are accepted into the program. In less than a decade, the potential economic benefit of integrated unmanned aerial systems into the nation's airspace is estimated to equal up to \$82 billion and create up to 100,000 jobs.\*

The pilot program will evaluate a variety of operational concepts, including night operations, flights over people, flights beyond the pilot's line of sight, package delivery, detect-and-avoid technologies, counter-UAS security operations, reliability and security of data links between pilot and aircraft, as well as local management of UAS operations subject to FAA oversight. Industries that could see immediate opportunities from the program include commerce, photography, emergency management, precision agriculture, and infrastructure inspections and monitoring.

"This program will put community and industry partnerships at the leading edge of aviation technology," said FAA Administrator Michael P. Huerta. "What we learn through testing operational concepts in these communities will be invaluable and give us clarity on rules that ensure safety and continued innovation."

"More and more businesses and public safety providers are embracing UAS to expand and enhance their service offerings," said Brian Wynne, President and CEO, Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International. "This growing demand illustrates a new renaissance in aviation and technology, which requires sustained collaboration and support by government at all levels."

The Drone Pilot Program is the Department's second major initiative leveraging new technologies and follows *A Vision for Safety 2.0*, which offers a path forward for the safe deployment of automated or self-driving vehicles.

"Creativity and innovation are part of the great genius of America—one of its hallmarks. We must safeguard and nurture this legacy," said Secretary Chao. "The integration of drones into our national airspace will be the biggest technical challenge to aviation since the beginning of the Jet Age. This program will help prepare the way for this new technology, and usher in a new era of aviation service, accessibility, and capability."

After evaluating all the applications, the U.S. Department of Transportation will select a minimum of five partnerships. Full details of the Federal Register Notice and Application process can be found [here](#).

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\*AUVSI's The Economic Impact of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration in the United States report shows the economic benefit of UAS integration. AUVSI's findings show that in the first three years of integration more than 70,000 jobs will be created in the United States with an economic impact of more than \$13.6 billion. This benefit will grow through 2025 when we foresee more than 100,000 jobs created and economic impact of \$82 billion.