



**Remarks Prepared for Delivery by
U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao
Announcement of DOT Drone Integration Pilot Program
DOT Headquarters
Washington, DC
Thursday, November 2, 2017**

Thank you everyone, for coming. I am pleased that so many distinguished guests could join us today for this important milestone in aviation innovation. Let me acknowledge Governor Susana Martinez, of New Mexico; Senator John Hoeven, of North Dakota; Congressman Jeff Denham, of California; Congressman Jason Lewis, of Minnesota; and the President of the Navajo Nation, Russell Begaye.

I am proud to announce this exciting new program, ahead of schedule! The Drone Integration 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. 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.

Not long ago, only the military flew drones—in combat zones. Today, drones are being used for many purposes, and companies are increasingly interested in adapting them for all kinds of commercial and humanitarian applications. With more than 900,000 UAS owners registered with the FAA, this program could not have come at a better time.

The value of drones was especially apparent in the aftermath of the recent devastating hurricanes. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) worked overtime to process more than 300 authorizations for drone use in the search, rescue, and recovery efforts. So, the possibilities for drone use are as endless as the human imagination. And a safe, robust drone industry could have a significant economic impact on our country, generating billions of dollars for our economy and creating tens of thousands of new jobs.

As Administrator Huerta noted, however, greater application of this technology has been limited because drone operations in this country are currently restricted beyond line of sight, over people, and in other circumstances. That is about to change. The data and best practices captured by this pilot program will be the basis of new regulations, which will create a path forward for the safe integration of drones into our national airspace.

The Federal Register Notice for the Drone Integration Pilot Program-- which implements the President's Memorandum of October 25, 2017-- goes on display today. In designing this pilot program, the Department listened carefully to the stakeholder community, many of whom are in this audience. I want to thank Dan Elwell, Earl Lawrence, and their colleagues from the FAA, who will be providing technical assistance on how to apply for this program in separate break out panels today.

Today's announcement is just one of many steps the Department is taking to implement the President's vision of accelerating the pace of innovation in our country. On September 12th, I announced "A Vision for Safety 2.0," which offers a path forward for the safe deployment of automated or self-driving vehicles. This technology has tremendous potential to reduce highway fatalities and provide greater mobility for underserved communities. Work is advancing so quickly, however, that an updated version is already in the works. That's how fast technology is changing.

That's why emerging technology requires a regulatory approach that ensures safety, security and privacy while encouraging innovation and preserving creativity. This last point is especially important. ***Creativity and innovation*** are part of the great genius of America—one of its hallmarks. The integration of drones into our national airspace will be the biggest technical challenge to aviation since the beginning of the Jet Age. Our job is to prepare the way for this new technology, so it can be safely deployed and usher in a new era of aviation service, accessibility, and capability.

Thank you.

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