



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Troy Nehls
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Nehls:

Thank you for your July 24 letter regarding improvements to functional awareness in low-altitude airspace, specifically concerning the creation of a pilot program to determine whether an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) is authorized to operate in a given location. I appreciate your continued leadership on this important issue and your support for the safe integration of drones into the national airspace system.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) shares your commitment to improving operational awareness as UAS operations continue to increase in complexity and scale. We recognize the importance of timely authorization determinations, improved information sharing among federal, state, local, Tribal, and industry partners, and scalable approaches that support both aviation safety and national security.

I support your recommendation, and the FAA has initiated a pilot program with NASA to evaluate the architecture for a low-altitude air domain awareness system. This initial step focuses on integrating a complete detection picture to support both government and public use cases, leveraging existing data sources (such as Remote Identification and Unmanned Aircraft Systems Traffic Management) as well as data from other government partners. Comprehensive workshops are scheduled in August 2026 and September 2026, bringing together government and industry to identify operational use cases, share equities, and ensure safety and security mission requirements are met. The results of these workshops will inform the development of a whole-of-government approach to air domain awareness and identify next steps towards the integrated detection and authorization capabilities. The FAA's UAS research budget has funded the initial pilot program with NASA and will be considered for follow-on FAA-funded efforts. As part of this program, the FAA will work with other agencies to determine an integrated architecture that addresses the operational, technical, legal, budgetary, and organizational considerations, including potential resource requirements and governance and will use the results of this assessment to determine the most effective path forward.

The FAA appreciates your interest in advancing these capabilities and recognizes the importance of the objectives identified in your letter, including improving real-time authorization awareness, enhancing data integration, establishing meaningful performance measures, and informing future policy considerations. We look forward to continued engagement with the Committee as this work progresses.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me or the Office of Government and Industry Affairs at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Bedford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bryan Bedford
Administrator