NEWS RELEASE

The City of SAN DIEGO
Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer

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U.S. Transportation Department Selects San Diego as **National Unmanned Aircraft System Testing Partner**

SAN DIEGO AMONG 10 AGENCIES CHOSEN NATIONWIDE TO ADVANCE AERIAL INNOVATION, SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CREATE JOBS

San Diego – Continuing his commitment to growing San Diego's reputation as a hub for innovation, Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer was joined Thursday by local businesses and innovation leaders to announce San Diego has been selected to participate in a new program by the U.S. Department of Transportation to advance the testing of unmanned aircraft technology, grow the innovation economy and create jobs.

"From wireless technology to human genomes, San Diego is renowned for its innovative spirit and talent that can't be matched anywhere else," Mayor Faulconer said. "This designation brings together some of our brightest minds in local government and private industry to develop cutting-edge technologies that are going to take robotic and aerial innovations to the next level."

The U.S. Department of Transportation's "Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Pilot Program" is an opportunity for state, local and tribal governments to partner with private sector innovators, operators and manufacturers to accelerate the development of drone technology.

"The City of Chula Vista is proud to be a regional partner with the City of San Diego and the industry leaders that support the innovation around Unmanned Aircraft Systems deployment," said Chula Vista Mayor Mary Casillas Salas. "This unique opportunity will help the City design, develop and test drones to support police officers and fire fighters during emergencies."

The program will inform the Department of Transportation about the integration of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in our skies. Key objectives of the program include:

- Working closely with private sector partners to advance commercial unmanned aircraft system operations and applications for technology
- Obtaining expedited Federal Aviation Administration approval for airspace authorizations
- Demonstrating operational solutions that reduce the need for waivers
- Incorporating community participation for meaningful dialogue for unmanned aircraft systems operations

San Diego's local program will include projects like flying medical specimens from UC San Diego for expedited results and cost savings, testing food delivery from restaurants to consumers using Uber, enhancing public safety by deploying drones to incident scenes in advance of first responders and testing the integration and communication between driverless cars and unmanned aircraft systems.

"This announcement proves San Diego companies, organizations, academics, government and non-profits are exceptionally well-positioned to advance the adoption into the national airspace," said Lauree Sahba, Chief Operating Officer for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. "Not only does this program elevate San Diego as a research and development hub, but it also brings enormous potential to our economically diverse region."

The City of San Diego's Homeland Security Department was the lead program applicant, with more than 20 regional organizations signing on to support the submission. Partners include:

- San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
- Qualcomm
- City of Chula Vista
- AT&T
- Palomar College
- California Governor's Military Council
- California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GoBiz)
- Uber
- Intel
- Coleman University

- GE Ventures
- UC San Diego Health
- Port of San Diego
- Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International
- San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center
- Verdego Aero – Provides urban transportation market with safe, clean and quiet hybrid-electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft that can fly piloted or autonomously.
- Airmap – Connects airspace authorities with drones to provide safe and efficient drone operations
- Cape – Offers a cloud-based system for drone telepresence and data management
- Matternet -- Provides drone technology and ground infrastructure to help healthcare systems transport blood and pathology samples between hospital facilities
- Avitas Systems – A GE Ventures-affiliated company that offers robotic-based autonomous inspections and data analytics focused increasing safety and efficiency
- Infragard San Diego – FBI-affiliated nonprofit focused on mitigating criminal and terrorist threats to protect regional infrastructure

This collaboration led to San Diego being among only 10 agencies nationwide chosen to participate, including the states of Kansas, Virginia, Alaska and North Dakota and the cities of Reno and Memphis.

"We are eager to work with our partners and the U.S. Department of Transportation to promote nationwide Unmanned Aircraft Systems innovation and integration," said John Valencia, the City's Homeland Security Director. "This pioneering program will foster capabilities that will greatly enhance the safety and security of San Diego residents, particularly in the areas of effective Unmanned Aircraft System operations by public safety organizations, and resilient communications during emergencies and in times of crisis."

Today's announcement follows a similar designation by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which selected the San Diego region as one of 10 autonomous vehicle testing sites in the nation in 2017. The designated testing sites form a national community that share information and collaborate with the private sector to advance the safe development of unmanned vehicles.

"We are looking forward to helping today's winners unlock the enormous potential of drone operations, which will create new services and jobs in their local communities," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

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