

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2012

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

As the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) considers locations for establishing unmanned aircraft system (UAS) test facilities, I want to ensure Alaska's unique location, existing expertise, and corresponding operational advantages remain in the forefront of the FAA's discussions as a possible test site.

Alaska offers the FAA a diversity of terrain, climate, and abundant airspace. Due to Alaska's unique environment, there are many situations where unmanned aircraft are the only safe aviation asset that can be used. For years the University of Alaska, in conjunction with the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, has deployed UAS to conduct low-altitude marine mammal surveys hundreds of miles from shore in potentially hazardous weather. Additionally, the University has utilized UAS to monitor wildfires in mountainous terrain where low visibility may pose a threat to manned aircraft.

Just as Alaska was able to demonstrate its unique suitability as a testing venue with the Capstone program, I believe our state is ideally situated to lead the way in incorporating UAS safely into our nation's airspace. It is my sincere hope the FAA will see the merits of an Alaska UAS test site and include Alaska's expertise and as several sites are being considered. Thank you for your consideration of this request and please feel free to contact me or James Feldman on my staff at 202-224-9639 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator