



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Greg Campbell
Director

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Dear Community Leader:

Here at the Department of Aviation we are working closely with our public and private sector partners across the Commonwealth to understand and address issues and challenges regarding the safe integration of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) or “drones” into our communities. I am writing to share some important developments in this area and to request your support, as well as that of your organization. We believe the “drone economy” is maturing quickly, and it represents a massive economic development opportunity where we aim for our part to position Virginia as a leader among states. In addition, while further into the future, these same measures are laying a solid foundation preparing our state for the era of Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM) as an integrated part of our everyday lives.

One of the foundational capabilities we’ve put in place is the Virginia Flight Information Exchange (VA-FIX). This program represents a critical first step we are taking to leverage drones and drone-related technologies to enhance public safety and security. VA-FIX is a tool that allows state and local governments, along with other key aviation-related stakeholders (i.e. airports, critical infrastructure, etc.) to share information and address key safety and policy concerns while keeping the airspace open, secure, and integrated with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) control of the national airspace.

The Department is also pursuing the implementation of House Bill 742 (HB 742). This bill acknowledges that local government has specific needs in the areas of public safety, emergency management, quality of life and zoning and planning.

The bill states that a political subdivision may, by ordinance or regulation, regulate the take-off and landing of an unmanned aircraft, as defined in § 19.2-60.1, on property owned by the political subdivision. Any such ordinance or regulation shall be developed and authorized in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Aviation. The political subdivision shall report to the Department any ordinance or regulation adopted pursuant to this section, and the Department shall publish and update annually on its website, and any other website the Department deems appropriate, a summary of any such ordinance or regulation adopted.

This Department understands the challenges and opportunities in implementing HB 742 and is establishing a workable implementation process. VA-FIX was built independently of the provisions of HB 742.

However, it shall be used by DOAV as a platform for sharing information relevant to any local regulations adopted pursuant to HB 742 and other regulations. VA-FIX provides a clear, central, public mechanism for UAS operators and the UAS industry to obtain authoritative state and local information rather than having to collect guidance individually from every jurisdiction in the Commonwealth.

As you know, the aviation community places a premium on collaboration. The willingness of public and private sector leaders and operators across the state to work together has made a tremendous difference. My request is that you visit the “Aviation Technology” section of the Department’s website (<https://doav.virginia.gov/programs-and-services/aviation-technology>) and learn more about VA-FIX and DOAV’s focus on aviation data governance in the Commonwealth. There are excellent resources there that go into much greater detail that I believe will be most helpful to you in your leadership capacity. I also ask that you contact Dr. Amber Wilson on my team so we can assist you with answering questions and obtaining a VA-FIX user account for the appropriate members of your organization.

We sit at a critical point in time where your awareness and engagement will make a tremendous difference. I thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation. If I can ever be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Greg Campbell
Director