FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION REAUTHORIZATION PRIORITIES
ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY (AAM)

Priority 1: FAA should quickly commence rulemaking to develop certification standards for both piloted and unpiloted electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) and other powered-lift Advanced AAM and UAM aircraft. The Administrator should report to Congress annually on progress in implementing the rule.

RULEMAKING.—Within 6 months of bill enactment, FAA should issue an NPRM to establish certification standards for remotely piloted, and piloted, passenger and cargo carrying aircraft and ground control stations. The final rule should be issued within 24 months.

REPORTS.—The Administrator should provide a written report to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation one year after enactment and periodically on an annual basis thereafter. The reports should include status updates on the progress of the rulemaking by FAA to ensure robust Congressional oversight.

Priority 2: FAA should be directed to complete the Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) powered lift rule no later than December 31, 2024 -- FAA’s own announced deadline for completion. We also propose Congress put in place an interim solution that would allow for “powered-lift” aircraft to operate commercially under existing regulations if this deadline is not met.

Priority 3: Include a Sense of Congress in support of U.S. global leadership in UAS and all facets of AAM, including Urban Air Mobility (UAM), Regional Air Mobility (RAM), eVTOL aircraft, electrification, and increasingly autonomous aviation technology.

Priority 4: Ensure FAA provides clear timelines to enable operationalization of AAM and mandate reports to Congress and industry on AAM certification and operationalization.

Overview and Problem

AAM is an exciting new part of the aviation ecosystem, which we view as the overarching concept under which RAM and UAM reside. RAM and UAM will help connect both urban and rural populations to each other and to the rest of the nation, as well as move freight, regardless of geographic locations. According to NASA, RAM, “seeks to fundamentally change how we travel by bringing the convenience, speed, and safety of air travel to all Americans, regardless of their proximity to a travel hub or urban center.”

For the benefits of AAM to be more broadly realized, there should be a clear and stable process with clear timeframes for AAM certification. Without this, the U.S. domestic industry will fail to launch. Europe, China, and other competitors will fill the void and dominate the global market for manufacturing and development of these technologies. For the industry to scale, FAA must certify new aircraft platforms in a timely manner.
FAA does not have the personnel and expertise necessary to certify these aircraft within a timeframe that aligns with industry needs and for the U.S. to maintain global leadership. FAA needs more funding to hire additional personnel. Significant resources are needed to work through the certification process that is already underway at multiple applicants.

AUVSI has heard from our members and from FAA directly that the agency is working hard and performing significant work to get projects through the process. AUVSI agrees with that sentiment. However, FAA will need more resources moving forward, as there will be a growing backlog of applications and competition for limited resources among competition aviation technologies. This backlog will be caused by an uptick in certification applications, which are expected to significantly increase over the next 5-10 years as new companies enter the market.

FAA is actively working on the “Powered-Lift” SFAR which would put in place the commercial operations and pilot licensing path for eVTOL entry into service. This gating rulemaking for day one operations is necessary due to the new certification path utilizing Part 21.17(B) Special Class–Powered Lift. We appreciate Congressional oversight of FAA to ensure that the SFAR is completed in line with FAA’s stated deadline in order to meet industry timelines for commercial operations. It is imperative that Congress continues to provide strong oversight to ensure the process is completed on time, as well as create an interim policy that would enable early commercial operations if FAA should miss this deadline, or a company achieves type certification prior to rule completion.