

## FAA reaches critical milestone on the road to UAS type certification

20 November 2020

Today, 20 November 2020, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) published the first batch of proposed airworthiness standards for type certification of six different unmanned aircraft system (UAS) models for public comment. The publication of the proposed airworthiness standards (also known as a "G-1 Issue Paper") is an essential regulatory step that needs to occur before the FAA can issue a type certificate for a UAS. It is a critical development because this means the FAA is on the verge of issuing the first-ever standard type certificates for UAS.

The importance of type certification for the future of the commercial UAS industry in the United States and abroad cannot be overstated. Type certification is critical to enabling real-world, scalable, advanced commercial UAS operations. While the individual use cases vary, each applicant's proposed operations involve flights beyond visual line of sight of the pilot, and operations over people. The current process for approving expanded UAS operations (think operations in urban areas, of long distances, or in congested airspace) is a cumbersome and time-consuming case-by-case approval process requiring issuance of waivers and/or § 44807 exemptions.

The pathway to enabling these sort of complex but safe UAS operations will be much more streamlined for companies operating a UAS with a standard airworthiness certificate.

Six applicants had papers published in the *Federal Register*, including Airobotics, Matternet, and Zipline. As outlined in the [FAA's type certification policy](#), the applicants are all seeking type certification of their UAS models as a special class of aircraft under 14 Code of Federal Regulations §21.17(b). While the FAA has existing airworthiness standards for most traditional manned aircraft, due to their unique and novel design features, no such standards currently exist for UAS. Under §21.17(b), the FAA can type certify UAS as a special class of aircraft using customized airworthiness standards that the agency deems appropriate to the design of the UAS. Since the process of developing individualized airworthiness standards for a particular UAS model is considered a rule-making activity, the FAA is required to publish the proposed standards in the *Federal Register* and seek public comment on those proposed standards. The public comment period is open through 21 December 2020.

Congratulations to these six companies. This is undoubtedly an exciting day for them, but also for the broader commercial UAS industry. It is heartening to see the policies and regulations moving forward to enable this exciting new industry.

Here's a quick look at a few of the UAS models that had their proposed airworthiness standards published today:

**Airobotics Inc. OPTIMUS 1-EX**



**Zipline International Inc. Zip UAS Sparrow**



**Matternet, Inc. M2**



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