

MOTION

Urban aviation is quickly becoming an option for both passengers and for the transportation of goods. Known broadly as Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM), this emerging technology has the potential to become an integral component of a city’s multimodal network and transform the way people, goods, and emergency services move around metropolitan areas.

AAM transports people and goods for low-altitude, short-distance regional trips. While it has the potential to create new mobility options that improve how people and goods travel, it could also lead to increases in noise pollution, air pollution, privacy and public safety concerns, and socioeconomic impacts if policymakers do not proactively establish a robust regulatory framework.

Commercial drones are used for jobs ranging from inspecting power lines, buildings, and crops, to aerial photography and the transport of small items. According to Drone Industry Insights, a German research firm, the value of this market reached \$22.5 billion in 2020 and will increase in future years.

In August 2020, Amazon received federal approval through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to operate its fleet of Prime Air delivery drones. While the Prime Air fleet is not ready to immediately deploy package deliveries at scale, it is actively flying and testing the technology. Additionally, in April 2021, Alphabet-owned Wing became the first drone delivery company to receive FAA approval for commercial deliveries in the U.S. The United States Postal Service also won approval from the FAA in October 2020 to operate a fleet of drones as an airline.

New aviation operators are already seeking opportunities to develop infrastructure in Los Angeles, including converting parking garages and existing heliports to vertiports (or stations where people or cargo can be loaded onto AAM aircraft). The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the federal body which governs navigable airspace, has committed to signing off on commercial operations by late 2023 or early 2024.

Since 2018, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation has explored key areas for government engagement on the issues of urban aviation. As the use of AAM and commercial drones continues to grow, it is critical that the City examine opportunities to protect local control and set regulations that reflect the complex urban environment, and the transportation needs of local residents.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Department of Transportation, the Department of City Planning, and other relevant departments, to report on the current permitting and regulatory environment for AAM, including commercial drone operations, and recommendations for a local regulatory framework and permitting in the City, as well as an appropriate fee structure.

PRESENTED BY: 
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SECONDED BY: 

ORIGINAL



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