VIRGINIA COMMERCIAL SPACE FLIGHT AUTHORITY

September 29, 2015

Gary A. Norek
Manager, Airspace Policy and Regulations Group
U.S. Department of Transportation
Docket Operations, M–30
West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Re: FAA Docket No. FAA–2015–2776 and Airspace Docket No. 15–AEA–5

Dear Mr. Norek:

Regarding FAA Docket No. FAA–2015–2776 and Airspace Docket No. 15–AEA–5, the Board of Directors and the organization of the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority (VCSFA) wholeheartedly support the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposed rule for expanding the NASA Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) Restricted Airspace in support of ongoing and future flight operations.

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Virginia Space Authority is in the process of developing an Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Runway at the north end of Wallops Island at NASA WFF. The UAS Runway design includes a 3000-foot long by 75-foot wide runway with a 75-foot cleared area around the perimeter. The Concept of Operations (CONOPS) includes both government and commercial customers, with flight operations executed in close coordination with NASA WFF Range. These flight operations will support growth of the UAS industry and generate economic development for the Commonwealth of Virginia in the aerospace sector.

UAS flight operations are inherently dynamic and ever changing. Furthermore, being a relatively nascent technology and industry, UAS flight operations often involve tests of new, first-of-its-kind technologies, which are by their very nature high-risk/hazardous, thus requiring evacuated airspace. In support of the VCSFA UAS flight operations, it is envisioned that NASA WFF would activate its Restricted Airspace only when needed to ensure public safety during high-risk/hazardous flight operations. NASA WFF has a well known and respected history of managing its existing Restricted Airspace responsibly and only when required for safety, ensuring minimal impact to the associated flying community at large.

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The expanded Restricted Airspace proposal appears sensible and right-sized to ensure public safety while minimally impacting the flying public. Furthermore, it would considerably improve the operational flexibility and offerings of the VCSFA UAS Runway to potential customers, adding to the overall economic development benefits. Thus, we strongly support expedient passage of the Federal Aviation Administration's proposed rule for expanding NASA Wallops Flight Facility's restricted airspace.

Respectfully,

William Readdy

William F. Readdy
Chairman
Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority

cc: Bill Wrobel, Director, NASA Wallops Flight Facility
Dale Nash, Executive Director, VCSFA

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