Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

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            AFN-1
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Subject: Emergency Clearance from OMB for an Information Collection Request

Summary

AVS requests that AFN seek emergency clearance from OMB to collect information from members of the public beta testing the FAA's B4UFLY smartphone.

Background

The FAA has documented over 675 pilot and law enforcement reports of unmanned aircraft "events" in 2015. In comparison, the FAA received 238 of these reports in the entirety of 2014. This increase in reports, particularly in close proximity to airports, suggests that many unmanned aircraft system (UAS) operators are unaware of safety guidelines and policies as well as potential hazards these operations may pose to manned aircraft operations.

The FAA's B4UFLY smartphone app will provide situational awareness of flight restrictions – including locations of airports, restricted airspace, special use airspaces, and temporary flight restrictions – based on a user's current or planned flight location. The risk posed to the National Airspace System (NAS) by increasingly unsafe UAS operations makes the immediate release of this app vital.

In addition, Public Law 112-95, Section 336 requires model aircraft operators to notify the airport operator and air traffic control tower (if one is located at the airport) prior to operating within 5 miles of an airport. Currently, there is no established process to facilitate this exchange of information. The B4UFL Y app's initial concept included providing phone numbers for users to call air traffic control towers (ACTCs) to fulfill this notification requirement. However, further analysis showed that frequent calls to an ACTC could disrupt normal tower functions and

possibly create a safety risk. Therefore, the FAA will develop an electronic notification process using functionality in the B4UFL Y app. The app is planned for beta release in August 2015.

Users will not be able to fulfill the statutory requirement for notification using the beta version of B4UFLY. This initial version will collect flight data from users, which will help the FAA develop automated procedures for accomplishing electronic notification when Version 1 of B4UFL Y is released to the general public (targeted by December 2015). Electronic notification in this manner will ultimately give air traffic personnel real-time information about potentially unsafe UAS operations around airports, enabling immediate safety mitigation activities. It will also make notification easier for the public, and thus increase compliance with the law.

To ensure that flight safety is not compromised within the U.S. National Airspace System, it is imperative that the FAA receive approval from OMB to conduct this collection of information as soon as possible.