



## Memorandum

Date: March 7, 2022

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | FAA's Certification of Urban Air Mobility Aircraft | Project No. 22A3002A000  
Federal Aviation Administration

From: Nelda Z. Smith  
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To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

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In recent years, interest in Urban Air Mobility (UAM)—the use of highly automated or autonomous aircraft to transport passengers within urban areas—has grown significantly. This new technology, including electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, promises many benefits, such as reduced commuting times and urban congestion, and may introduce entirely new methods of transportation within and between cities in the coming decade. However, it also creates new and complex safety challenges for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)'s aircraft certification process.

FAA is currently reviewing applications for certifying eVTOL aircraft, using existing Federal Aviation Regulations for aircraft certification.<sup>1</sup> However, these regulations are still primarily intended for traditional small aircraft with a pilot onboard, whereas eVTOL aircraft may be entirely autonomous. Additionally, UAM aircraft include new technology and novel systems compared to current small aircraft, requiring additional scrutiny during the certification process.

Given the challenges surrounding the certification of UAM eVTOL aircraft, the Ranking Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and its Subcommittee on Aviation requested that we assess FAA's processes to apply existing airworthiness standards and guidance to this novel technology. Accordingly, our audit objective is to determine FAA's progress in establishing the basis for certification of UAM aircraft, including ensuring the safety of novel features and providing guidance to applicants.

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<sup>1</sup> FAA is currently deciding if UAM vehicles will be 14 CFR 21.17(b) (special class) or 14 CFR 23 with special conditions.

We plan to begin the audit later this month and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FAA Headquarters and other selected FAA offices and local facilities as needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-2140 or Robin Koch, Program Director, at (404) 562-3770.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100