



## **AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Future Item for the City Council Meeting of March 19, 2013  
Action Item for the City Council Meeting of March 26, 2013

**DATE:** February 28, 2013  
**TO:** Ronald L. Olson, City Manager  
**FROM:** Tom Tagliabue, Director, Intergovernmental Relations  
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**Resolution supporting the application of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to pursue Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) designation for Texas as an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) test range.**

### **CAPTION:**

Resolution supporting the application of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to pursue Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) designation for Texas as an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) test range.

### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the resolution is to demonstrate to the FAA that Corpus Christi fully supports the selection of Texas' application, specifically, the application of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi on behalf of the State of Texas.

### **BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS:**

On February 14, 2013, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) solicited proposals from state and local governments, eligible universities and other public entities to develop six unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) research and test sites around the country. Through the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, Congress directed the FAA to establish this program to conduct critical research into how best to safely integrate UAS systems into the national airspace over the next several years and what certification and navigation requirements will need to be established. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is working with Governor Rick Perry and other institutions of higher education in Texas to submit an application to be selected as one of the six test sites. Applicants have 80 days to submit their research and test-site proposal to the FAA. The FAA anticipates selection of the six test sites will occur later this year.

The expanded use of UAS represents a major next step in aviation innovation and will present economic opportunities both for the communities that are selected for this pilot program and for the aerospace industry in general.

Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi has been developing research on the UAS industry at the Conrad Blucher Institute; the country's largest endowed geospatial information systems research institute, and using the University's certificate of authorization (COA) which provides permission to use airspace. The test site would research and advise on issues concerning the use of UAS in the national airspace. These issues include security of GPS systems, laws and policies regulating the potential for high UAS traffic, and how the military and civilian will share airspace.

The creation of the test site brings the potential for new businesses in this field to come to the Coastal Bend region.

According to a recent National Public Radio News report, the FAA estimates there could be as many as 10,000 drones flying over the U.S. by the end of the decade — doing everything from cargo delivery to law enforcement to news gathering.

Part of this process involves helping the FAA address a number of unanswered questions – how UASs communicate with air traffic control, airplanes and other UASs? When and where UASs can fly? How will personal privacy be protected? In the Feb. 14 RFP, the FAA requested public input into FAA efforts to ensure that privacy questions surrounding the pilot program are properly addressed. The FAA's proposed privacy approach emphasizes transparency, public engagement and compliance with existing law. Under the FAA privacy proposal each test site operator must ensure that its privacy policies are informed by Fair Information Practice Principles, a widely accepted framework of privacy principles at the core of numerous federal and state privacy laws. The privacy proposal is available today on the FAA's website – [Federal Register Request for Comment \(Copy Only\) \(PDF\)](#).

The FAA technical evaluation of submitted proposals will include consideration of geographic diversity, climatic diversity, location of ground infrastructure and research needs, population density and air traffic density, as well as specific goals and objectives to be accomplished.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

The City Council has three options:

- (1) Approve the resolution of support;
- (2) Oppose the resolution of support, or
- (3) Take no action.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

None

#### **CONFORMITY TO CITY POLICY:**

N/A

#### **EMERGENCY / NON-EMERGENCY:**

This is a non-emergency item.

**DEPARTMENTAL CLEARANCES:**

City Attorney, Economic Development, Assistant City Manager for Business Support Services

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

Operating       Revenue       Capital       Not applicable

| <b>Fiscal Year: 2012-2013</b> | <b>Project to Date Expenditures (CIP only)</b> | <b>Current Year</b> | <b>Future Years</b> | <b>TOTALS</b> |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Line Item Budget              |  |                     |                     |               |
| Encumbered / Expended Amount  |  |                     |                     |               |
| This item                     |  |                     |                     |               |
| BALANCE                       |  |                     |                     |               |

Fund(s)

**Comments:** None

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the resolution

**LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

Council Resolution  
FAA press release