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TWO GO VIRGINIA STUDIES HIGHLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL AIRSPACE

Virginia Institute for Spaceflight and Autonomy (VISA) at Old Dominion University and the Hampton Roads Alliance Release Results from Respective Studies on Opportunities for Uncrewed Systems and Aviation Industries

NORFOLK, VA (June 27, 2024)

The Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable, the support organization for GO Virginia Region 5, today released two studies highlighting the region's aerospace industries and growth opportunities ahead. Combined, these studies provide a roadmap on the integration of emerging technologies into our airspace and assess the region's current aviation assets and economic potential. As technologies, like uncrewed systems and advanced air mobility, move from concept to reality, Hampton Roads must prepare for and take advantage of an increasingly complex airspace. These studies provide key insight into best practices for these technologies and their growth potential.

AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS (UxS) ROUTE AND CORRIDOR PLANNING GRANT

Led by VISA at Old Dominion University, the Autonomous Systems (UxS) Route and Corridor Planning Grant brought together key stakeholders to discuss implementation and integration of UxS into the region's airspace. Specifically, these stakeholders sought to discuss how UxS could be used to solve key transportation challenges, identify obstacles and barriers that might limit the operational integration of UxS, and propose key routes and corridors for UxS flight. To ensure the necessary breadth of stakeholder engagement, VISA established military, community and transportation planning, government, and private industry working groups.

The study concludes:

- Hampton Roads has a highly complex airspace – with often overlapping military, commercial, and port operations – which presents unique challenges for the operational integration of UxS,
- Given this airspace complexity, operational problems tested and solved in Hampton Roads can be translated and operationalized in almost any location,
- UxS integration demands a regional approach to regulations to ensure the consistency and domain awareness across localities and local, state, and federal entities, and
- A singular, cross-cutting organization should be chartered to work with public planning and military communities to ensure an integrated regional approach to the long-term adoption of UxS, the best allocation of resources, and to pursue further federal and state funding opportunities.

The entire Autonomous Systems (UxS) Route and Corridor Planning Grant report can be found [here](#).

HAMPTON ROADS AIR STUDY PLANNING GRANT

The aviation and aerospace industries are in a period of both transition and innovation. The nature of commercial air service is evolving and new industry sectors, like Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS), are emerging from developmental stages into commercial reality. As a regional economic development organization, it is critical that the Hampton Roads Alliance (Alliance) and its partners understand these changing dynamics and position the region to thrive in the new future of aviation.

For these reasons, the Alliance engaged USI Inc. and Swelbar Associates, to develop the Hampton Roads Air Study (Air Study). The Air Study comprehensively evaluates regional aviation assets and characteristics and makes recommendations to enhance efficiency, competitiveness, and collaboration within the aviation ecosystem of Hampton Roads.

Findings from the study include:

- Hampton Roads is rich in assets and well-positioned to grow the regional economy through the aviation industry.
- The Study makes ten strategic recommendations and identifies nine new business sectors to pursue. The strategic recommendations are primarily focused on collaborative regional aviation planning. The business sectors are in the field of Advanced Air Mobility, which includes uncrewed systems, new models for passenger air service, and aviation using alternative fuels.
- The business model for commercial air service is changing, especially for smaller, non-hub airports. These airports, in particular, should aggressively pursue new business sector opportunities to remain important community and economic assets.

The entire Hampton Roads Air Study Planning Grant report can be found [here](#).

Nancy Grden, President & CEO, Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable, says, "GO VA Region 5's current Growth & Diversification Plan highlights uncrewed systems and aerospace as key growth industries for Hampton Roads. We applaud the strategic direction from VISA and the Hampton Roads Alliance to investigate opportunities for alignment, expansion, and innovation ahead."

"Together, these studies provide a roadmap to how the region can take advantage of the autonomous and uncrewed revolution to bring high paying technology jobs to Hampton Roads," says **Tom Frantz, Chair, GO Virginia Region 5**. "Thank you to VISA and the Hampton Roads Alliance for their forward-thinking studies on how we can position the region as a national leader in autonomous systems and advanced air mobility."

David Bowles, Senior Research Fellow, VISA and ODU, says, "VISA, in the Office of Enterprise Research and Innovation (OERI) at Old Dominion University, is excited to be part of this collaborative effort to help grow the autonomous ecosystem in Hampton Roads."

"It was a pleasure to engage the region during the implementation of this Autonomous Systems (UxS) Route and Corridor Planning Grant. The study provides a high level yet comprehensive look across our region regarding the potential barriers and pathways for infusion of Autonomous systems into our operational environment. This study combined with the Hampton Roads Air Study Planning Grant provides critical information, data, and considerations for the region as it plans for the future and looks to grow and infuse this UxS for our region." said **John Costulis, previous Deputy Director of VISA and GO VA Planning Grant Lead**.

Doug Smith, President & CEO, Hampton Roads Alliance, says, “The timing of these studies is opportune. With shifts in the industry and development of new technologies, the time is now to assess the allocation of resources to enhance the connectivity of people and goods to and from Hampton Roads and position the region for economic growth through new aviation sectors like Uncrewed Systems and Advanced Air Mobility.”

ABOUT THE HAMPTON ROADS EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

The Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable’s mission is to improve the trajectory of the region’s economic growth and competitiveness, incorporate innovation and entrepreneurship into the economic base, establish economic development and innovation strategy in an equitable manner, and provide strategic leadership through collaboration for the region’s economic future. The Roundtable also serves as the support organization for Region 5 of Virginia’s innovative GO (Growth & Opportunity) Virginia program. [Visit website here.](#)

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR SPACEFLIGHT AND AUTONOMY

The Virginia Institute for Spaceflight & Autonomy (VISA) is chartered to grow the entrepreneurial ecosystems for space flight and autonomy. The Institute is the hub to leverage Virginia's world-class assets in space launch, autonomous systems, modeling and simulation, and data science to solve real-world problems. Through industry, academic and governmental agency partnerships, VISA's vision is to create an environment of research, technology, commercialization, and educational opportunities to grow the spaceflight and autonomous systems industry in Hampton Roads and beyond. [Visit website here.](#)

ABOUT THE HAMPTON ROADS ALLIANCE

The Hampton Roads Alliance is the leading regional economic development organization for the Hampton Roads region of Virginia. It is a nonprofit, public-private partnership supported and led by the region’s most influential business leaders, local governments, and top academic institutions. The Alliance is proud to represent 14 localities who, with the support of nearly 100 private sector investors, govern and resource the organization and its regional economic development efforts. Those efforts focus on the following services areas: business attraction, business expansion and business intelligence. [Visit website here.](#)

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