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| May 6, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Announces Department of Transportation Has Selected City of Reno, Flirtey for Highly Competitive Drone Pilot Program**

*In April, Heller Urged Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao to Choose the City of Reno’s Application*

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), a member of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, announced today that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has selected the City of Reno and Flirtey, a Nevada-based drone delivery service company that is pioneering life-saving applications of drone technologies, for its highly competitive Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program after Heller made the case for their application to DOT Secretary Elaine L Chao. The DOT received more 140 applications and only 10 were selected for the program.

Launched in October 2017, the [UAS Integration Pilot Program](https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/uas_integration_pilot_program/) allows state, local, and tribal governments to collaborate with private sector entities, such as UAS operators or manufacturers, to help accelerate drone integration into the national airspace system. [In April, Heller urged Secretary Chao to choose the Reno-Flirtey application for the UAS pilot program](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/1c2ee359-ef40-4b46-89d8-ef6eda2ff706/04302018%20NV%20Heller%20Cortez%20Masto%20Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Chao%20re%20FAA%20Pilot%20Program%20for%20City%20of%20Reno%20and%20Flirtey.pdf). Heller noted Flirtey’s previous partnership with the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority, an ambulance and care flight emergency medical services provider, to launch the first automated external defibrillator (AED) drone delivery service in the United States. He also remarked on the support from the community, including the Reno Police Department, Reno Fire Department, and a local hospital, that Flirtey has received for its efforts.

“I thank Secretary Chao for recognizing the critical opportunity that the Reno-Flirtey partnership presents not only to advance drone technology, but to save lives. For example, just one of Flirtey’s drones carrying automated external defibrillators operating in an area similar to Reno has the potential to save one life every two weeks. If this innovative technology is replicated throughout the country, it could significantly increase the cardiac arrest survival rate,” **said Heller.** “I’m proud that the DOT also recognized the promise of this partnership by selecting it as just one of 10 applications approved for this highly competitive program. As a member of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, I’ll continue to advocate for policies that further enhance Nevada’s standing as a leader in the safe implementation of drone technologies and work to ensure the private sector has the framework and leeway necessary for these technologies to thrive.”

During a July 2017 hearing, [Heller remarked to Secretary Chao that Nevada is leading the nation in the autonomous systems space](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=099B6127-9341-47AD-B5F1-B2A201796EF1) – both in the air and on the roads – due in part to its predictable climate and expansive air and space corridors, and he [discussed how policy can be updated to support Nevada’s designated UAS test site and better facilitate research and development of this cutting-edge technology.](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=099B6127-9341-47AD-B5F1-B2A201796EF1) He played an integral role in establishing Nevada as just one of just seven nationally recognized UAS test sites, and he has a long record of advocating in favor of federal policies that advance drone technologies and recognizes that there are more ways in which this technology can play a role in our daily lives. For example, the [FAA Reauthorization Act of 2017](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/6/heller-secures-significant-wins-for-nevada-in-faa-reauthorization-billl) included Heller’s provisions that will promote the state’s already robust drone industry by extending the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) test sites, allowing for small UAS package delivery, and authorizing beyond line-of-sight operations at the test sites, including Nevada’s.

**Background**:

The following Heller provisions were included in the Committee-passed FAA Reauthorization Act of 2017:

* **UAS Test Sites and Authorizing Beyond Line-of-Sight Operations:** Since Nevada is one of the seven UAS test site locations, it will drive drone-related technological research and economic growth statewide. Sec. 2122 include Heller’s priorities to ensure the UAS [test sites](http://diversifynevada.com/key-industries/aerospace-defense/uav), including Nevada’s, are extended beyond 2019 and that the FAA engages the test sites in projects to test, research, and evaluate beyond line-of-sight operations.
* **Small UAS Package Delivery:**The Heller-Cantwell UAS carriage provision in Sec. 2136 directs the Department of Transportation (DOT) to establish a streamlined air carrier certification program tailored for unmanned aircraft systems carrying property, like packages.

During the 114th Congress:

* When the Senate FAA bill came to the floor in the 114th Congress, Senator Heller teamed up with Senator Hoeven on an amendment (S.Amdt.3500 to H.R.636) to ensure the UAS test sites authorizations were extended for a longer period. Heller, along with Hoeven and several colleagues, secured passage of this provision in the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016 (P.L.114-190) that was signed into law on July 15, 2016.

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