



Interested Party Testimony- House Aviation and Aerospace Committee

HB 77 — Operation Of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles In Ohio

November 14, 2023

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chair Willis, Ranking Member Baker and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 77.

My name is Howard Thompson, Project Management Liaison for Manufacturing Works. Manufacturing Works serves Northern Ohio as a non-profit, regional economic development agency focused on industry outreach, supply chain, technology alignment, strategic planning, and workforce development (specifically apprenticeship, mentorship, leadership, and youth development). Our leadership is guided by a Board of Directors comprised of the businesses we serve and the regional institutions we support.

As Dr. Mendel testified before you, The FAA helped push commercial drone market growth forward by formulating a regulatory framework with its consumer drone registry. As a result, drone manufacturers, software developers, and suppliers are capitalizing on this opportunity to create a fully developed industry around the production and use of drones. These suppliers include sustainable energy providers such as hydrogen fuel cells and manufacturers using advanced processes such as 3D printing.

Ohio is included in the leading cohort of early adopters of drone operations. This first group of early adopter states will engage with the FAA to develop the policies, regulations and procedures for the whole country. As Dr. Mendel indicated, one of our leading regional projects is the Northeast Ohio Flight Information Exchange (NEOFIX). NEOFIX is a working model for key elements of the infrastructure depicted and envisioned in Chapter 8 of the 2022 Ohio Drive Ohio Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Report. As NEOFIX moves forward, Manufacturing Works is leading an Advanced Air Mobility Northern Ohio Governance Advisory Network that also reflects the vision expressed in Chapter 8 of the 2022 Drive Ohio AAM Report, by focusing on minimal viable infrastructure, safety, deconfliction, and drone flight demonstrations.

House Bill 77, if implemented effectively, can support the safe growth and development of the drone market in Ohio.

The strategic roadmap Manufacturing Works and the Northern Ohio Governance Advisory Network has developed and is following requires a coordinated and concise implementation process. We are currently in Phase two of a six-part roadmap that includes:

- AAM Readiness Development
- Ecosystem Development
- Initial Operations
- Midterm Operations
- Complex Operations
- Advanced Operations

The analysis, demonstrations, and industry participation we have created for our success includes connectivity, power and charging, simulation labs, surveillance, aircraft, use cases, urban traffic management, and workforce. All that is needed to complete this roadmap is the funding of the execution of the four operations segments.

As Dr. Mendel mentioned, NEOFIX has received \$450,000 in funding from Cuyahoga County for the two calendar years ending in December 2024 and Manufacturing Works has supported the remaining funding for the development stages of the roadmap with \$350,000 in private investment.

The strategic roadmap created by Manufacturing Works and the Northern Ohio Governance Advisory Network has been designed to serve as a regional template adaptable anywhere across Ohio. As the first step in the roadmap, NEOFIX exemplifies that this model aligns with the state's DriveOhio July 2022 AAM Framework and can contribute to success for the entire State of Ohio.

An important lesson of our roadmap development has been understanding that we must include both private and public stakeholders in the process. As Dr. Mendel indicated earlier about the benefit of a public private partnership, its success is dependent on clear and concise coordination. We now have substantial experience with this process in Northeast Ohio and are excited to support the State of Ohio by bringing our expertise to anywhere in the state where it is needed.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity. I will now take any questions you may have.

Howard Thompson

Project Management Liaison, Manufacturing Works