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System Integrators Selected for North Dakota's Statewide UAS BVLOS Network

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – Three leading aviation infrastructure companies have been selected to provide systems engineering and integration services to build, implement, and operate North Dakota's first-of-its-kind, aviation-grade, statewide network for flying unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS). Collins Aerospace, a Raytheon Technologies Company, L3Harris Technologies, and Thales USA have been contracted to work with the Northern Plains UAS Test Site to enable real-world, scalable, commercial and public UAS BVLOS operations in North Dakota.

Last May, the State of North Dakota invested \$28 million in funding to support the creation of a statewide UAS network that would enable BVLOS flights to support operations across the state. The statewide network will facilitate economic growth opportunities in diverse industries, including agriculture, utilities, and public safety, by enabling UAS efficiencies for state and local agencies and commercial interests, both existing and future.

This strategic partnership of system integrators combines the expertise of giants in the aviation technology industry. These system integrators bring to the table decades of safety experience in manned aviation along with new and innovative ideas and access to cutting-edge UAS technology.

“With this partnership in place, North Dakota is well-positioned to create and implement what is really the next level in the UAS industry,” said Nicholas Flom, executive director of the Northern Plains UAS Test Site (NPUASTS), which administers the statewide UAS BVLOS network. “Nobody else is doing what North Dakota is doing.”

The first task order the system integrators have been charged with is to develop a BVLOS system development and implementation plan, with initial deployment in western North Dakota.

“We have multiple public and commercial use cases on the western side of the state, representing a variety of industries,” said Jim Cieplak, program manager for the statewide network at NPUASTS. “This will enable the network to provide real-world benefits as we continue to build it out and expand its reach.”

These system integrators will work to drive approvals from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). They will also support standards, policies, and procedures for safe and efficient integration of UAS into the National Airspace System (NAS).

About the Northern Plains UAS Test Site

The [Northern Plains UAS Test Site](#) (NPUASTS) is one of seven Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) unmanned aerial systems (UAS) test sites in the nation. Its mission is to collaborate with FAA and industry partners to develop systems, rules, and procedures to safely integrate unmanned aircraft into the National Airspace System without negatively impacting existing general or commercial aviation.