

Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act of 2025

Section-by-Section Summary

Sec. 1. Short Title; Table of Contents

This section designates the bill's title as the "Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act of 2025" and lists the table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions

This section provides global definitions for the terms "Administrator," "ADS-B In," "ADS-B Out," "Air Carrier," "Foreign Air Carrier," "Appropriate Committees of Congress," "Cabinet Member," "Comptroller General," "FAA," "Powered Lift," "Rotorcraft," "Secretary," "SMS," "Transport Airplane", and "Unmanned Aircraft System".

Sec. 3. Expert Compliance Review of FAA Safety Management System

This section directs the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to convene an independent expert review panel to review and evaluate FAA orders and policies to inform FAA's implementation of a comprehensive and integrated safety management system (SMS) for all lines of business within the FAA.

The review panel is directed to review (i) the extent to which FAA's SMS complies with relevant FAA orders and policies; (ii) the actual and projected safety enhancements achieved through FAA's prior implementation of SMS; (iii) the effectiveness of FAA's SMS including with respect to the four components of SMS, (iv) the extent to which the SMS and each of the four components of SMS are integrated among all lines of business of the FAA and understood and communicated to the personnel at the FAA, (v) the efficacy of FAA's Voluntary Safety Reporting Program as part of SMS, (vi) whether the United States should advocate at ICAO for changes, as appropriate, to Annex 19, and (vii) any other matter determined by the Administrator for which review by the review panel would be consistent with the public interest in aviation safety. This section also requires the review panel to issue recommendations to inform FAA's implementation of a comprehensive and integrated SMS at FAA and issue a report to the FAA and Congress based on the review.

Sec. 4. ADS-B Out Reforms.

This section would clarify and limit ADS-B Out exemptions for aircraft performing a "sensitive government mission," consistent with 14 CFR 91.225(f), and define "sensitive government mission" to exclude training flights, routine flights, and flights of Federal officials below Cabinet rank.

The section would amend the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to narrowly define “special mission aircraft” exempt from FAA’s ADS-B Out equipage mandate.

The section would direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the Department of Defense (DOD) and other Federal Agency use of ADS-B exemptions since 2019. Following the GAO review, FAA would then be required to determine whether Federal agencies that have been found to have improperly utilized ADS-B exemptions, shall be permitted to continue utilizing such exemptions. FAA would be required to brief Congress on such determinations.

The section would create a joint FAA-DOD council to regularly review government operations that utilize exemptions to the existing ADS-B equipage and transmission requirements to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

Section 5 – ADS-B In Requirement to Enhance Safety

This section would require mainline and regional air carriers to have ADS-B In installed and operational within four years after the date of enactment. FAA would be required to determine appropriate performance requirements to satisfy the ADS-B In requirement for the commercial fleet for the purposes of providing safety-enhancing capabilities for flight crews. The section would require the Administrator to issue relevant guidance to operators and other appropriate stakeholders on the types of equipment that satisfy the ADS-B In requirement.

Section 6 – Safety Reviews of Airspace

This section would require FAA to create or designate an oversight office within the FAA as the Office of FAA-DOD Coordination, which would be specifically tasked with coordinating airspace usage of military aircraft and rotorcraft. This office shall ensure that there is coordination between DOD and line of business offices within FAA, including the Air Traffic Organization.

This section would require FAA, in coordination with DOD, and any other appropriate Federal agencies, to conduct a safety review of all military, law enforcement, and civilian rotary wing, powered lift, and drone flight operations and flight routes in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Special Flight Rules Area, including DOD and emergency response provider flight operations, to evaluate any associated safety risk on commercial transport airplane operations at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). The review would be required to be initiated no later than 30 days after the establishment of the Office of FAA-DOD Coordination and completed no later than 120 days after the review’s initiation.

This section would also require FAA, in coordination with DOD, and any other appropriate Federal agencies, to conduct analogous safety reviews at all other Class B airports in Class B airspace to evaluate any associated safety risk on commercial transport airplane operations. For purposes of conducting the safety reviews, the FAA would be required to classify Class B Airports into two categories: airports with higher volumes of mixed air traffic and airports with lower volumes of mixed air traffic. The Administrator would be required to prioritize the safety reviews of airports with higher volumes of mixed air traffic and complete them within 2 years after initiation.

The section would require that the safety reviews include an evaluation of: (i) FAA's air traffic and airspace management; (ii) procedures for coordination between FAA and DOD, and any other Federal agencies, to designate and approve airspace use and flight routes for flight operations that are not commercial transport airplane flights; (iii) an assessment of any risks posed by military aircraft, civil rotorcraft, powered lift aircraft, and drones operating in Class B airspace near Class B airports; and (iv) a review of relevant incident reports submitted to FAA through multiple aviation safety reporting systems to identify safety trends regarding non-commercial transport airplane operations in Class B airspace near Class B airports.

FAA would be required to select qualified representatives from aviation labor organizations to participate in the safety reviews. After completing the safety reviews, the FAA would be required to submit the results to Congress, with recommendations for legislative or administrative action determined appropriate by FAA.

Section 7: FAA-Department of Defense Safety Information Sharing

This section would require FAA and the Army to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to permit, as appropriate, the sharing of information from the U.S. Army's aviation mishap reporting system, known as the Army Safety Management Information System, with FAA to facilitate communication and analysis of any applicable impacts to the safety and efficiency of civil aviation operations and to mitigate risk in the national airspace system.

This section would also require MOUs to be established between the FAA and the Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard to permit, as appropriate, the sharing of information from applicable aviation safety information systems to facilitate communication and analysis of any applicable impacts to the safety and efficiency of civil aviation operations and to mitigate risk in the national airspace system.

Section 8. No Disruptions to FAA Workforce

This section would prohibit the Executive Branch from imposing hiring freezes on FAA's workforce and reverse existing hiring freezes at FAA that were put in place as of January 20, 2025.

This section also prohibits any Executive Branch action to offer deferred resignation programs or voluntary furlough opportunities on or after the date of enactment to FAA's workforce.

This section would require a GAO review of the impacts of probationary employee firings at FAA occurring between February 14, 2025 through the date of enactment. GAO would be required to submit a report to Congress on the review with any recommendations for legislative and administrative action.

The section would also prohibit future reductions in force of FAA employees and reductions of full-time equivalent positions at the FAA.

Section 9. Extension of FAA Air Traffic Controller Max Hiring Requirement

This section would extend the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (P.L. 118-63) requirement for the FAA to hire the maximum number of air traffic controllers per year by five additional years – extending the requirement from FY 2028 through FY 2033.

Section 10. Air Traffic Controller Training Improvements

Section 10a. Enhanced Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative Program

This subsection would codify FAA's existing Enhanced Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI) program. The program allows FAA to hire qualified college graduates, who have completed FAA-certified curriculums providing air traffic controller education equivalent to the level of education and training provided at the FAA Academy, to begin training at an air traffic control facility immediately upon graduation, provided they meet requisite FAA qualifications. This subsection would require that FAA certify the air traffic curriculums and that all evaluations of students at selected accredited institutions of higher education would be conducted by FAA-approved and certified evaluators.

To expand the program, FAA would also be required to set a minimum target of certifying qualified Enhanced AT-CTI curriculums at at least 15 total accredited institutions of higher education. The subsection would also allow FAA to make funds available to existing and prospective program participants to recruit and hire FAA-approved and certified evaluators.

Lastly, the GAO would be required to study the performance and effectiveness of the Enhanced AT-CTI program no later than five years after the program's codification, and issue a report to Congress and FAA with the study results and relevant recommendations for legislative and administrative action.

Section 10b. Improving Aviation Medical Examiner Staffing

This subsection would require the FAA, using funding made available through FAA's Operations account, to hire more qualified licensed medical professionals to increase the Aviation Medical Examiner workforce and fully staff the FAA's Office of Aerospace Medicine.

Section 10c. Air Traffic Control Instructor Recruitment Program

This subsection would require FAA to develop an outreach program to assist with the recruitment, hiring, and retention of air traffic controller instructors at the FAA Academy and at FAA air traffic control facilities with a demonstrated shortage of air traffic control personnel.

FAA would be required to conduct outreach and engagement to all FAA air traffic controllers relating to air traffic control instructor career opportunities within one year of controllers meeting (i) the minimum retirement threshold; and (ii) the statutory retirement age of 56 years.

The FAA would also be required to make air traffic controller instructor qualification criteria, hiring materials, and job postings clearly available on FAA's website.

Section 11 – TARAM Analyses

This section would require the FAA to conduct a Transport Airplane Risk Assessment Methodology (TARAM) analysis of transport category aircraft accidents that result in any fatality, regardless of whether or not an aircraft design or manufacturing issue is believed to have contributed to the accident. The FAA would be required to provide notice to congressional committees of jurisdiction on the findings and recommendations of a TARAM conducted following a transport airplane accident in which a loss of life occurred.

The FAA would be required to submit to Congress a report with the results of the TARAM analysis, together with recommendations for legislative and administrative action determined appropriate by the Administrator.

This section would also require the FAA to designate multiple employees at the FAA as TARAM analysis experts responsible for TARAM guidance, processes, and updating relevant FAA policy statements to satisfy the requirements of this section.

Section 12 – Employee Reporting.

This section would require a Department of Transportation Inspector General (DOT OIG) audit of FAA – including the FAA’s Whistleblower Protection Program – to review whether FAA is appropriately processing and acting on submitted complaints. The DOT OIG audit would be required to not compromise the individual identities of those who have submitted reports via FAA’s Whistleblower Protection Program and the FAA Hotline. DOT OIG would be required to submit a report to Congress with the results of the audit and recommendations for legislative and administrative action determined appropriate by DOT OIG.

Section 13 – Conflicts of Interest.

This section would require the Secretary of Transportation to issue an interim final rule requiring strict adherence to government-wide financial conflicts of interest law under section 208 of title 18, United States Code.

This section would require the DOT Office of the Inspector General to review the Department of Transportation’s compliance with this section and identify any applicable conflict of interest waivers granted for the DOT relating to DOT and FAA employees, contracting, acquisition, and procurement. The DOT OIG would be required to brief Congress based on the results of the review.