

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 14, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Bedford,

We are concerned about the impact that Amazon Prime Air’s proposed drone delivery hub—which would be based in Westborough, Massachusetts—would have on residents and the local environment. Despite the noise and environmental risks of Amazon’s drone operations, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has authorized operators such as Amazon to deploy their fleets without completing a site-specific Environmental Assessment (EA) of their impact on the surrounding communities. This decision is especially problematic in Massachusetts localities, given the differences between it and previously studied communities, local opposition, and the inadequate treatment of the risks associated with transporting hazardous-materials. We request that the FAA require a rigorous site-specific EA of Amazon’s Westborough facility, with a robust public comment period, before authorizing operations there.

On July 28, 2026, the FAA issued a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA), which allows qualifying drone operators to launch their fleets without a site-specific EA when the proposed operations fall within the PEA’s scope. In particular, the FAA issued a single nationwide Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), declaring that drone deliveries across the country would have “no significant impact” on the environment, provided they meet the agency’s conditions.¹ In making this determination, the FAA relied on previous site-specific EAs that it completed for drone delivery proposals. Under this approach, operators need not complete a separate EA or undergo a site-specific public comment period if they do not exceed certain thresholds established in the PEA.² The sweeping nationwide FONSI gives drone operators a path around separate EAs for individual communities such as Westborough.

Although Congress directed the FAA to implement a programmatic approach to EAs for drone operations,³ this authorization should not foreclose a site-specific EA where local circumstances warrant one. As the FAA stated, the agency has the authority to require additional

¹ Federal Aviation Administration, *Final PEA, FONSI/ROD for Drone Package Delivery Operations in the United States* (July 28, 2026), https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones/Part_135_Final_PEA_FONSI-ROD-NOA_Appendices_A-D_Final.pdf.

² FAA, *Final EA/FONSI-ROD, Amazon Prime Air, Kansas City* (May 1, 2026), https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones/AMZ-KC-Final-EA.pdf

³ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. L. 118-63, § 909(c); Federal Aviation Administration, *supra* note 1.

environmental reviews where drone delivery operations exceed the national analysis.⁴ Moreover, even in cases where the operations do not exceed the thresholds in the national FONSI, the FAA should still require additional environmental reviews where justified by specific characteristics of the local community — as is the case in Westborough for three reasons.

First, the prior EAs underlying the FAA’s nationwide FONSI do not provide a sufficiently representative basis for dispensing with a site-specific EA in Westborough. The FAA and drone operators completed 23 site-specific EAs for drone delivery proposals in Arizona, California, Oregon, Texas, Arkansas, Utah, Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina.⁵ These communities are overwhelmingly located in the Southwest, West, and South, with none in New England. Westborough has a dense historic town center, along with residential development concentrated close to its commercial core. The region’s biological and environmental diversity, bursting with forests and wetlands, is likely also starkly different from the communities evaluated by the FAA and drone operators. Finally, the weather and daylight conditions in Massachusetts — two conditions relevant to drone operations — are almost certainly different from those found in places like Arizona or Texas. These differences matter to the assessment of noise exposure, wildlife impacts, and the conditions under which drones would operate, making it inappropriate to grant Amazon an exemption from a site-specific EA for its Massachusetts facility.

Second, the local opposition to the facility justifies a closer environmental review. Local elected officials have sent letters calling for a pause on Amazon’s drone operations pending further review of concerns including noise and safety.⁶ A community meeting held on September 23, 2026 to authorize the zoning changes needed for Amazon’s drone operations drew unprecedented turnout from concerned residents.⁷ And an independent resident survey, with more than 1,200 responses as of early October 2026, found 92 percent of respondents opposed the proposed Westborough facility.⁸ At a state level, Massachusetts is one of 15 states currently suing the FAA for its nationwide FONSI.⁹ In other words, Amazon is now trying to quickly move drone operations into Massachusetts under a streamlined regulatory process the state itself is challenging. These are precisely the community-specific noise, safety, and quality-of-life concerns a site-specific EA and comment period exist to surface and address.

Finally, the national analysis’s inadequate treatment of drone battery-fire risks provides a further reason to require a site-specific EA in Westborough. The FAA’s final PEA/FONSI lists “Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention” among the environmental impact

⁴ Federal Aviation Administration, *supra* note 1

⁵ FAA, *Draft PEA for Drone Package Delivery Operations* (Dec. 2025), Section 3.9, https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/Part_135_National_DRAFT_PEA_approved_508.pdf.

⁶ Letter to Tareq Wafaie from Michael O. Moore, Hannah Kane, and Kate Donaghue (Sept. 28, 2026) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55e4a26de4b0a8e051b346d3/t/6abbd2fd04da9f029bf20a10/1790694141596/Westborough+Delegation+Letter+to+Amazon+re+Amazon+Prime+Air.pdf>.

⁷ Haye Kesaloo, *Amazon Drone Hub Faces Pause Call From Lawmakers as State Sues FAA*, Drone XL (Sept. 29, 2026) <https://dronexl.co/2026/09/29/amazon-westborough-drone-hub-pause-massachusetts-lawmakers/>.

⁸ Westborough Area Drone Delivery Survey, <https://dronefeedback.com/> (last visited Oct. 8, 2026).

⁹ Letter to Tareq Wafaie from Michael O. Moore, *supra* note 9.

categories “not analyzed in detail” in the document the agency now relies upon to clear hubs nationwide.¹⁰ The PEA’s stated rationale is that “the proposed action is not expected to include any activities that would use hazardous materials.”¹¹ However, drone package delivery depends on lithium-ion batteries. In fact, in October 2025, an Amazon drone collided with a crane in Tolleson, Arizona, resulting in a battery fire — the exact type of risk from drone delivery that the FONSI did not appropriately consider.¹² Amazon also received approval from the FAA to deliver devices containing lithium-ion batteries by air, and the Department of Transportation is currently developing rules that would allow for more transportation of hazardous materials by drone.¹³ Moreover, it is unclear how Amazon’s drone operations will affect essential local services, such as hospitals with air operations, in case a battery-fire or other safety incident occurs. A site-specific EA should address this deficiency by evaluating the potential environmental consequences of battery fires in the Massachusetts service area and identifying any measures needed to reduce those risks before authorization is considered.

Taken together, these concerns — applying the FONSI to a community different from those previously assessed by the FAA, significant local opposition, and the limited evaluation of hazardous material risks — warrant requiring Amazon to complete a site-specific EA, with a public comment period, before the FAA authorizes Prime Air operations in Massachusetts. We respectfully request the FAA’s written response by October 29th confirming whether it will require such a review. If the FAA declines to make that commitment, please explain why the agency considers its existing process sufficient to address each concern raised in this letter and provide any site-specific analyses and technical documents that informed that decision.

Thank you in advance for your response, and we look forward to continuing to work with you towards drone and aviation safety.

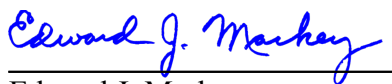
Sincerely,

¹⁰ Federal Aviation Administration, *supra* note 1.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Comments of the Attorneys General of Illinois et al. (Jan. 23, 2026), https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/2026_01_23_FAADroneDeliveryCommentLetter.Revised.pdf.

¹³ Jibin Joseph, *Amazon Drones Can Now Deliver iPhones, Galaxy Phones, AirPods in 60 Minutes*, PCMag (May 20, 2025), <https://www.pcmag.com/news/amazon-drones-can-now-deliver-iphones-galaxy-phones-airpods-in-60-minutes>; Hazardous Materials: Modernizing Regulations To Facilitate Transportation of Hazardous Materials Using Highly Automated Transportation Systems, 90 Fed. Reg. 55,836 (proposed Dec. 4, 2025) (to be codified at 49 C.F.R. pts. 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, and 178).



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