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HAI and Viola Expand Role in Bringing Advanced Air Mobility to First Flight

Alexandria, Va. (August 9, 2022) – Helicopter Association International (HAI), the leading advocate for the vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) industry for nearly 75 years, continues to develop and expand its leadership role as it works to bring advanced air mobility (AAM) forward to its first commercial flight.

“AAM is complementary to the role helicopters have played in supporting our society and providing business and industry solutions for over 70 years,” says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. “The rotorcraft industry is in the best position to lead the expansion of AAM and incorporate it into the airspace we’re already using.”

Viola represented the vertical flight industry at the White House Summit on Advanced Air Mobility on Wednesday, Aug. 3. The summit featured presentations from NASA, the FAA, local community leaders, the US Army, the Department of Transportation, and the White House. Representatives from federal agencies, academia, and the AAM industry participated in several panel discussions for an audience of AAM stakeholders. Topics included the benefits of AAM, security concerns, preparations for the next generation of flight, and American global leadership and competitiveness.

“I offer my thanks to the White House for this opportunity to share more about the future of vertical lift,” says Viola. “I look forward to working alongside other industry leaders as the United States begins to integrate AAM technologies into the National Airspace System.”

HAI has also played a key role in advocating for the safe integration of AAM into the national airspace by moving AAM legislation forward in Congress and assisting with the creation of the AAM Caucus on Capitol Hill.

At HAI HELI-EXPO 2022, held in Dallas in March, HAI led a panel of industry experts in examining the FAA’s proposed plan for AAM infrastructure in the United States. At the same time, HAI also distributed a 12-page white paper, produced in conjunction with NEXA Advisors and UAM Geomatics, titled [*Helicopter Industry Embraces Electric Flight: How Advanced Air Mobility Creates New Market Opportunity for Today’s Helicopter Operators*](#).

“From regulatory engagement and standards definition to new training, safety and quality assurance programs, to industry and market research, HAI will play an active role in the introduction of new types of electric VTOL aircraft and their safe, successful operation by members,” Viola is quoted as saying in the white paper.

Throughout the spring and summer, Viola has been a vocal champion for the safe integration of AAM aircraft into the airspace where rotorcraft operate. Viola represented the VTOL industry at a General Aviation Town Hall sponsored by Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) in Tarkio, Mo., at presentations delivered at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wis., and at a recent summit of aviation organization leaders.

One challenge facing the VTOL industry is the current shortage of pilots and aviation maintenance personnel. In 2018, HAI’s charitable foundation released a [study forecasting severe shortages of rotorcraft pilots and mechanics](#) in the near future. The research conducted by the University of North Dakota predicted the US VTOL industry would by 2036 experience a shortfall of more than 7,600 pilots and more than 40,600 mechanics/engineers.

“The HAI Board of Directors sees these numbers as a concern and as an opportunity to address overall workforce recruitment, development, and retention,” say Viola. “As a result, we are standing up an HAI Workforce Development Working Group. HAI is seeking volunteer members from around the world to help collaborate on solutions. We must prepare the workers entering the rotorcraft industry today to lead tomorrow’s evolution of flight.” HAI members interested in taking part in the working group can learn more and apply [online](#).

“There could not be a better time for people to join the VTOL industry,” says Viola. “AAM will not happen overnight. When it does, there will be a need for experienced personnel. Not only is there an immediate demand for people to join the aviation workforce, but there will also be significant opportunities for pay, benefits, and advancement as an entirely new class of aircraft becomes operational.”

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.