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January 5, 2021

**Subject:** Thales Letter of Support for Vantis and Northern Plains UAS Test Site

The Honorable Chairman Ray Holmberg-

I am writing you on behalf of Thales, a global organization with more than 80,000 employees worldwide, revenues of \$24 Billion and one of the systems integrators for the State's beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) initiative—Vantis—to express our support for Governor Burgum's initiative to use Legacy Funds to stimulate the growth of the unmanned aviation sector in the State.

As a partner with the State, Thales believes that there is enormous potential in the expansion of the UAS industry within the State and across the country. Thales, along with a globally recognized policy and financial consulting firm, recently conducted a technology and economic study to assess the impact of UAS operations in the State of North Dakota over the next 15 years. The study determined that the planned State investment over the next two legislative cycles can lead to a sustainable services stream valued between \$40 million to \$100 million per year by 2035. Even though there is uncertainty in these forecasts, the study concludes that the latent demand from commercial UAS operators is extremely strong and investment represents a way to prime the pump for the UAS industry in North Dakota.

I provided this information up front to show you that today's investment by the State yields benefits for generations of North Dakotans to come. The benefits of UAS operations extend beyond North Dakota's largest cities. In fact, close to 75% of the benefits realized from the Vantis network improve the lives of those in rural areas. Vantis will soon prove that UAS operations to assist farmers for agriculture, the Bureau of Minerals and Natural Resources for land management, oil and gas companies, and the Department of Transportation for infrastructure improvements and preservation will be apparent. This will lead to new economic opportunities for the State and its residents but will also pave the way for educational opportunities for North Dakota's children because they will witness first-hand how technology improves their lives and the lives of their families.

Perhaps the largest benefit that can't be quantified just yet, is the importance that the State of North Dakota plays in the global aviation ecosystem. Aviation is an industry that is risk adverse, slow to change. However, when it does, programs like the one that the State is undertaking with Vantis, serve as the envy of the industry inspiring others to follow. Vantis is showing air navigation service providers around the world the impact that investment in infrastructure, UAS operations for several applications and evolving aviation policy means to the global aviation community. North Dakota's initiative is referenced globally today—we know this because outside of the United States, Thales has customers in over 170 countries that equate to more than 40% of the total airspace on Earth. The State is in a great position to capitalize through Vantis not only to benefit its own citizens, but as a leading voice in the global integration and adoption of UAS.



Vantis is unique in that this is an opportunity for the State to capitalize on infrastructure investments that will see a continual return on investment. Thales has participated in similar efforts in other States where money was spent on infrastructure to address a small fraction of the UAS integration challenge. The State, through Vantis, understands that partnerships and strong business relationships need to be formed to advance the future of UAS integration. This initial investment will spur economic drivers in several industries from transportation to health care to, eventually, package delivery. Vantis benefits those in rural areas as much as, if not more, than those located in the State's most populated areas. With the industry poised to "take-off," now is not the time to reduce investment, but, continue so that the path towards self-sustainment can be realized within the next five years.

As you can tell, we are very passionate about the future of Vantis. Thales is playing a key role in the U.S. and globally to advance the future of the UAS portion of the aviation industry. We believe in the mission of the State and the Vantis initiative. We look forward to working with the team to deploy capabilities to enable UAS integration into the national airspace system. We urge you to support the ongoing funding for the Vantis network to help attract more companies, like Thales, to North Dakota and provide opportunities for generations to come.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Donovan", is positioned below the "Regards," text.

Todd Donovan

VP, Airspace Mobility Solutions—Americas

CC: Frank Matus, Thales Air Traffic Control / Digital Aviation Solutions  
Nicholas Flom, Executive Director NPUASTS