

Aviation and telecom groups agree to share data to help resolve 5G safety concerns

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Aviation and telecom groups said they will share data to help resolve safety concerns related to new 5G wireless service, which Verizon Communications and AT&T are slated to roll out on Jan. 5 2022.

“We are pleased that after productive discussions we will be working together to share the available data from all parties to identify the specific areas of concern for aviation,” wireless trade group CTIA, Airlines for America and the Aerospace Industries Association said in a joint statement.

The Federal Aviation Administration last month raised concerns that the 5G service could interfere with aircraft radio altimeters. Earlier this month it issued an order that could prohibit pilots from using radio altimeters to land when visibility is low.

The CTIA has said the service upgrade would not interfere with those altimeters and has noted that other countries have rolled out 5G without issues.

“The FAA is encouraged that avionics manufacturers and wireless companies are taking steps to test how dozens of radio altimeters will perform in the high-powered 5G environment envisioned for the United States,” the agency said in a statement.

Airline executives last week warned of costly flight disruptions due to the problem. Such flight cancellations, if they were to occur, would come as the industry is looking to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“If we go back to decades-old procedures and technology for flying airplanes, cancel thousands of flights per day ... it will be a catastrophic failure of government,” United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby told reporters after a Senate hearing on Dec. 15.

The CEOs of Boeing and Airbus on Monday wrote to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to support a delay to the 5G rollout and proposed limiting cellular transmissions near airports where those radio altimeters would be used.

The FCC did not comment on a potential delay to the rollout but said: “We remain optimistic that we will resolve outstanding issues to launch 5G to meet the country’s evolving needs.”

