

Leading the World in Supersonic Flight

Administration Policy:

President Trump issued an executive order (EO) titled [Leading the World in Supersonic Flight](#) which aims to repeal the prohibition on overland supersonic flight, establish an interim noise-based certification standard, and repeal other regulations that hinder supersonic flight.

The EO directs the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to begin a rulemaking process to repeal the longstanding ban on supersonic flight over land ([14 CFR 91.817](#)) and replace it with an interim noise-based certification standard. It would also require the FAA to eliminate outdated sections ([14 CFR 91.819](#) and [14 CFR 91.821](#)) that currently impede the growth of U.S. supersonic technology.

The FAA is also required to propose a new supersonic aircraft noise certification standard under [14 CFR 36](#) which regulates noise standards for aircraft. This proposed rule would define acceptable noise thresholds for takeoff, landing, and en route supersonic operation based on operational testing and research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) data, as well as community acceptability. The final rule is required within 24 months and must include a mechanism for regular updates to reflect ongoing technological advances in aircraft noise reduction technology.

The EO requires the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to lead an interagency effort to coordinate RDT&E on supersonic aviation. This would involve identifying regulatory and commercial needs, supporting industry testing at federal sites, and ensuring findings are shared in ways that support both U.S. regulatory goals and international collaboration. OSTP is required to provide these findings to the FAA to guide future noise and environmental rulemaking.

The EO would also direct the Secretary of Transportation, through the FAA and in consultation with OSTP and other relevant agencies, to engage foreign partners and international organizations—particularly the International Civil Aviation Organization—to build consensus around global regulatory standards for civil supersonic flight. The FAA, with the Department of State, would also be tasked with pursuing bilateral aviation safety agreements to facilitate international supersonic operations.

Background:

- There has been an over 50 year ban on breaking the sound barrier over U.S. soil set out in [14 CFR § 91.817](#), which dictates that no person may operate a civil aircraft in the United States at a true flight Mach number greater than 1. This rule prohibits non-military related supersonic flight over the United States, setting an artificial speed limit in the national airspace.
- NASA has [set out](#) to engineer a “[low-boom](#)” [supersonic jet](#) that flies quietly to resolve noise nuisance concerns. After years of development, the X-59 has cleared key tests and is on the way to its first test flight.
- A fact sheet by the White House is available [here](#).