

# Daily Journal

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## TOP 40 UNDER 40

California's leading lawyers of 2018

### Paul J. Fraidenburgh

Drones utilizing artificial intelligence and flying cars sound like science fiction — but they are the everyday reality of Fraidenburgh.

“We have a very successful aviation practice group here,” he said. “We noticed about five years ago there’s a coming tidal wave in the unmanned sector. The industry is moving from small consumer weight drones, microdrones, to aircraft weighing thousands of pounds. And we are as a nation losing the race toward integrating unmanned aircraft systems into our skies.”

Fraidenburgh also does down-to-earth litigation, as when he successfully briefed, argued and won before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2017 a dismissal for an Idaho public airport client of eight-figure claims by a developer. *SilverWing at Sandpoint LLC v. Bonner County*, 15-35589 (9th Cir., filed July 16, 2015).

Beyond such routine cases, Fraidenburgh operates in a world where the Jetsons might feel at home. “Not a day goes by when I’m not excited by new uses for these aircraft,” he said. Among his clients in the self-flying air taxi space: Airbus SAS’ partnership with Audi AG and Kitty Hawk Corp., backed by Google founder Larry Page.

In April, Airbus through its on-demand helicopter platform Voom and Audi said they will deliver an end-to-end transportation service, starting in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Mexico City.

Fraidenburgh’s part of the action is regulation compliance. “‘Urban air mobility’ is the buzz phrase,” he said. “Remember it. If we can solve the regulatory issues, the industry is set to take off.”

Fraidenburgh said he spoke with NASA officials recently at a Silicon Valley conference and learned that there’s been a surge in



**Buchalter APC**

Irvine  
Practice: Aviation law  
Age: 32

applications for licenses for unmanned aircraft for transportation. “People think that the Jetsons era is so far off,” he said. “But my clients are solving the technical barriers. This is the focus now in aerospace. It’s happening today. The remaining barriers are regulatory — and that’s me. Lawyers will solve these problems of balancing the requirements of federal, state and local authorities.”

The fundamental problem is that civil aviation is exclusively under federal jurisdiction. “Urban air mobility is unique because of the

local transportation factors,” Fraidenburgh said. “What will work in New York City might be very different in San Diego. It’s an exciting time for aerospace law because we are looking at local government solutions as they conflict with federal law.”

The good news, he said, is that the Federal Aviation Administration appears ready to look at resolving the emerging conflicts. “The FAA is open for business,” Fraidenburgh said. “It’s an exciting time for aerospace law.”

— John Roemer