

**STATEMENT OF THE
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HEARING ON
NEXTGEN: THE FAA'S AUTOMATIC DEPENDENT SURVEILLANCE- BROADCAST (ADS-B)
CONTRACT
OCTOBER 17, 2007**

I want to welcome everyone to this Subcommittee hearing on *NextGen: The FAA's Automatic Dependant Surveillance – Broadcast (ADS-B) Contract*.

A major part of FAA's Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) plan to transform our air traffic control system is the transition from ground-based radar to satellite-based surveillance. Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast, or “ADS-B” as it is commonly known, is the key enabling technology for that transition.

Within the last 60 days, the FAA has taken two major steps forward with ADS-B. At the end of August, the FAA awarded a performance-based service contract valued at almost \$1.9 billion to a consortium led by the ITT Corporation.

The ITT team is required to build, own and operate a system that will provide nationwide ADS-B surveillance and broadcast services by as early as 2013.

And earlier this month, the FAA published a notice of proposed rulemaking that would require aircraft operating in certain classes of airspace to equip with “ADS-B Out” avionics by 2020.

Over the last several months, the FAA has described ADS-B as the “cornerstone” and “backbone” NextGen, and “the future of air traffic control.” I agree that ADS-B is a technology that holds enormous promise. It is potentially much more accurate than radar, which may help the FAA and airspace users utilize our airspace more efficiently. It can enhance safety by providing surveillance to areas that cannot be covered by radar, and by granting pilots greater situational awareness. It may also enable the FAA to avoid hundreds of millions of dollars in cost by downsizing its ground based infrastructure.

However, that said, reasonable expectations must be set about what relief ADS-B can realistically provide for the type of meltdown and record setting delays that our system faced this summer.

Unfortunately, I think that the American public has been led to believe that the silver bullet solution for gridlock is a new satellite-based surveillance system. The truth is, ADS-B will probably not provide significant tangible nationwide benefits for several more years, and then only in conjunction with other NextGen technologies that are years away from implementation.

It is time for the rhetoric to stop and for this Administration to start explaining all the “ifs” and “whens” about ADS-B and the NextGen system.

First, some have pointed out that ADS-B is a relatively mature technology that is not highly complex. Regardless, we should not underestimate the technical complexity of building and integrating this new system into the NAS. As with any modernization program, there is clearly the potential for setbacks and slippage on implementation.

In addition, even if the ITT team meets the FAA's ambitious schedule for deploying ground infrastructure and services, how quickly ADS-B can deliver major benefits will be determined largely by how quickly users equip. The FAA's proposed rule does not mandate ADS-B equipage until 2020.

Furthermore, some of ADS-B's most advanced applications and capabilities, like reduced separation standards and aircraft self-separation, have received the most public attention. However, the FAA first needs to demonstrate that ADS-B performs as well as our current radar-based system before these capabilities can seriously be considered. Moreover, some of these advanced capabilities require "ADS-B In" avionics, which the FAA did not mandate in its proposed rule.

Given that the FAA has advertised ADS-B as "the future of air traffic control," the public should know that the FAA placed a tremendous amount of responsibility for that future in the hands of the private sector.

Instead of adopting a more traditional acquisition strategy for ADS-B, the FAA has opted for a service contract approach, whereby the ITT team will build the ADS-B ground stations and own and operate the equipment. The FAA will pay subscription charges for ADS-B broadcasts transmitted to aircraft and air traffic control facilities.

The FAA estimates that its contracting approach will save the Government roughly \$820 million over the next 30 years and cut 5 years off the deployment schedule. Regardless, I believe that there are inherent risks in this strategy. The FAA cannot let reliance on its contractor lead to a loss of objectivity with regard to the contract's performance or the protection of consumers. Both Congress and the FAA must provide vigorous oversight of this contract going forward.

With that, I want to again welcome our witnesses today and I look forward to their testimony.

Before I recognize Mr. Petri for his opening statement, I ask unanimous consent to allow 2 weeks for all Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.