

STATEMENT OF DR. KARLIN TONER, DIRECTOR, STAFF TO THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR POLICY COMMITTEE ON NEXTGEN COORDINATION, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR BUDGET AND PROGRAMS/CFO, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, ON ATC MODERNIZATION AND NEXTGEN: NEAR-TERM ACHIEVABLE GOALS, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, MARCH 18, 2009

Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the leadership role of the Senior Policy Committee in setting the strategic direction for the Next Generation Air Transportation System or “NextGen.”

To introduce myself, I am currently assigned on detail from the Federal Aviation Administration to the Department of Transportation as an advisor on NextGen coordination. I am an aerospace engineer with more than 15 years of prior experience leading NASA research programs involving government, industry and academia. My publications include topics ranging from the design of aircraft to analysis of air traffic management concepts.

LEAD NEXTGEN STRATEGICALLY

NextGen will completely transform our Nation’s air transportation system. Our system will be safe, more capable, more environmentally responsive and more effective at achieving our security and defense needs. NextGen requires rethinking air transportation. We must consider the capabilities of aircraft, airports and operations, looking at the system as a whole and integrating safety from the earliest conceptual design. For example, satellite-based measurements of location together with aircraft performance models will better anticipate flight paths and enable proactive air traffic management. Effective security will protect people, goods and airspace in a system with increased capacity. Operations will be harmonized on a global scale. Delays introduced by adverse weather will be reduced by integrating weather forecasts and observations into operational traffic flow planning.

Meeting the civil aviation, homeland security, economic, environmental protection, and national defense needs for NextGen, requires the alignment and integration of the air-transportation-related vision and activities among several federal

agencies. For this reason, the Vision 100 – Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-176) established the Senior Policy Committee (SPC) and the NextGen Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO), chartering them to jointly transform the U.S. air transportation system by 2025.

Five “SPC partners” lead the transformation: the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Defense and Homeland Security and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The SPC members, heads of these partnering agencies, advise the Secretary of Transportation on national goals and strategic objectives for NextGen to meet future United States’ aviation needs. Members provide policy guidance for the integrated work plan created by the JPDO, identify resource needs and make recommendations for funding for planning, research and development activities within their respective organizations.

ENABLE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NEXTGEN

The Secretary of Transportation and the SPC are accountable for NextGen, a national effort with a broad scope of policy, economic and technological complexity. They need to have the tools to do this difficult interagency leadership job. Two new additions to the toolbox enable effective participation: a direct SPC support staff and an advisory committee, both of which were mandated by a recent Executive Order. As Staff Director, I will lead the action to insure that these two new tools are ready for the task.

PROVIDE SUPPORT STAFF

One of my first responsibilities as Staff Director is to establish, lead and direct a full support staff. I am working with the SPC partners to fill the staff positions, insuring that the duties for each position are needed at the department level. At the Department of Transportation, I serve as the senior staff advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary concerning all NextGen matters. The staff leads the coordination and resolution of high-level interagency policy issues related to NextGen transformation; provides oversight of the development of the interagency cross-cutting budget documentation and high-level performance measures; and monitors progress toward interagency deployment of NextGen demonstrations and capabilities.

It is imperative to stress that the coordination staff will have an interagency focus. The Staff Director is a liaison between the Secretary and the SPC partnering agencies.

The support staff will work with the SPC to deliver a biennial report that measures collective progress toward NextGen.

ENGAGE PRIVATE SECTOR DISCUSSION

Work is underway to establish a Federal Advisory Committee that has a broad spectrum of representatives including general aviation, commercial aviation, and aviation labor. Through public discussions, the committee will aim to identify areas where the aviation community can forge the consensus that will inform SPC decisions in setting a path forward. The advisory committee will focus on NextGen policy, planning and performance measures. Specific details regarding the charter, membership and tasking are in formulation now.

RECOGNIZE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE NEXTGEN CHALLENGE

The expeditious transportation of people and goods has made great societies grow and flourish, beginning with roads and expanding to shipping, to railways, to highway systems and to aviation. The traveling public expects an aviation system that is safe, secure and convenient. Despite the current economic downturn, forecasts continue to predict growth in demand for air travel. This growth must be sustainable, addressing environmental protection. To realize sustainable growth, airspace system users want to introduce new modes of travel bringing greater complexity to operations.

Quite simply stated in the FAA's NextGen Implementation Plan 2009 (<http://www.faa.gov/nextgen>), "NextGen means flying more passengers, more cargo, more types of aircraft, more safely, more precisely, and more efficiently, using less fuel, making less noise and creating less environmental impact."

The SPC's top-level strategic direction is needed to direct such an ambitious transformation. A plan, with a clear timeline and deliverables, must integrate roadmaps for policy, technology and capabilities across the broad spectrum of research, engineering and development, implementation and operation. Execution of the plan requires cooperation and collaboration among government and the private sector. Further, the complexity of NextGen demands clear accountability and rigorous oversight of its development and implementation.

CONCLUSION

Establishing and maintaining a national air transportation system that meets the present and future civil aviation, homeland security, economic, environmental protection and national defense needs of the United States is not easy. To get there, we have to do a superior job addressing national policies, executing interagency plans and gauging progress against performance measures. And, the SPC must lead us there. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.