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Thank you for inviting me here to discuss my thoughts for the next authorization of our aviation programs. This is one of my highest priorities – and one of the most important bills Congress can pass for the future of the Nation’s transportation system.

Eighteen months ago, almost to the day, I began calling for us to do something transformational in the next aviation bill. To do something with a broad, common vision – not just focused on stakeholders’ wish lists, but something that represents what’s best for the entire system, and its users.

Since then, I’ve been talking with you and stakeholders throughout the aviation community. I’ve been working with my Committee Members, with Chairman LoBiondo and Congressman Sam Graves, with Ranking Members DeFazio and Larsen. All of us have our own ideas, but we agree that continuing on the present course is the surest path to failure.

Throughout the discussions I’ve had – with you and with my colleagues – I’ve borrowed my theme from the Rolling Stones:

“You can’t always get what you want
“But if you try sometime, you might find
“You get what you need.”

What we need is a U.S. aviation system that’s built for the future. And now, we need to move forward.

Today, I want to talk about my principles for an Aviation Bill, but first I want to emphasize a few key reasons the U.S. aviation system is at this critical crossroads.

Ever since the first flight of the Wright Brothers, the U.S. has led the world in moving people & goods by air. Our aviation system is the busiest in the world. Soon, 1 billion passengers will depend on our system every year.

But I believe we're on the brink of losing our lead.

Our Air Traffic Control system is based on technology from the last century. It's questionable whether our ATC system is capable of just sustaining current demands – delays already cost passengers and the economy \$30 billion a year. But, there's no question whether this system can handle the growth that's coming. It can't.

Everyone here is familiar with the federal government's decades-long effort to modernize the system. Everyone here also knows those efforts aren't working. Only 5 of 76 stakeholders GAO talked to said FAA is capable of implementing NextGen. Taxpayers and stakeholders have spent billions, but there's no end in sight. And NextGen is only FAA's most recent effort – Verizon has had four network upgrades since FAA began NextGen.

Another fundamental reason we are at a crossroads: federal funding certainty for aviation has ceased to exist. The volatile political process has demonstrated how fragile the funding stream has become. The last FAA authorization was extended 23 times before a new law was signed. And now, sequesters, furloughs, and shut-downs seem to lurk around every corner. We have to re-inject stability into how we fund aviation.

Finally, the federal bureaucracy and red tape are stifling American innovation, crippling U.S. competitiveness. Our international competitors, who benefit from more nimble regulatory structures, have the advantage. If we lose our lead, business and jobs will follow – like they have in other industries we once led.

The bottom line is this: relying on yesterday's best aviation system guarantees that we will not have the best system of tomorrow.

This Aviation Bill will look forward to our future. It will provide transformational, comprehensive reform of the FAA and our aviation system, driven by several principles:

- Providing a safe, efficient, modern aviation system,
- Benefiting passengers with fewer delays and greater reliability,
- Fostering innovation,
- Keeping America competitive in this vital economic sector.

To fulfill these principles, I believe it's essential to separate air traffic control from our safety regulator. This is not a revolutionary concept. Presidents Bush and Clinton attempted to do this.

In the last 20 years, 50 countries around the world have successfully separated out their ATC service. In virtually every place this has been done, safety levels have been maintained or improved, ATC systems have been modernized, service has been improved, and costs have been generally reduced.

After examining various models, I believe we need to establish a federally chartered, fully independent, not-for-profit corporation to operate and modernize our ATC services.

Creation of this corporation would naturally be carried out within the bounds of the Constitution. The corporation will be governed by a board of the system's users. Those users and the public interest will be fairly represented, and steps will be taken to prevent any conflicts of interest, or domination of the board by any one group.

We need to get the governance right.

We will establish a stable, self-sustaining, and fair user fee funding structure for ATC, removed from the budget process and the annual appropriations cycle, and free from the funding uncertainty, political meddling, and bureaucratic red tape that have plagued FAA and ATC services for years. This will insulate the ATC operator from events like sequester, agency closures, and government shutdowns.

Taxpayers will benefit from the operating efficiencies created – and I believe annual savings will be in the billions.

And we will stop wasting billions more on failed modernization efforts that have been over-promised, and over-budget. Detached from the inefficient federal procurement system, modernization will be within reach. It will no longer be the carrot always dangling from the stick in front of us.

In transitioning to this new ATC operator, our controllers and other aviation workers – who keep the system and passengers safe – must be treated fairly. In fact, we need to involve controllers and workers more in modernizing the system.

During and after that transition, priorities will be maintaining the day-to-day function of the current ATC system and NextGen implementation, and avoiding any adverse effects on safety.

Let there be no mistake about that – safety will remain the highest priority of the U.S. aviation system, and FAA will continue to be responsible for safety oversight and regulation. In fact, separating ATC out of the government will allow FAA to strengthen its focus on safety.

It's important to note that ATC reform is only one way in which this reauthorization will comprehensively reform our aviation system. We need to do more to help FAA continue to perform the critical missions that will remain with the agency.

For example, another reform that will help the agency's efficiency and effectiveness is in the certification of aviation technologies.

The current FAA bureaucracy undermines our global competitiveness and puts American jobs in jeopardy. This aviation bill will enhance American companies' ability to compete and get their products to market faster.

FAA's certification processes must be streamlined – while maintaining strong safety oversight. FAA's current authority to delegate certain certification functions must be utilized more. Workforce training and development opportunities – for FAA inspectors and engineers – must be improved. There must be greater FAA collaboration with industry and labor stakeholders, more transparency, and more accountability for both FAA and the industry. And there must be clear certification performance objectives, metrics, and goals by which Congress and others can better measure progress.

Cutting the red tape in this process, and other reforms we will provide for the agency, will greatly benefit our system and our economy. Without a doubt, FAA needs to keep the system as safe as possible, but they should also help our industry continue to lead.

I believe fundamental reforms such as these can serve as future cornerstones for our aviation system.

We continue to work toward that legislation, as the September expiration of the current law approaches. I hope to introduce a bill later this month, and consider it in Committee soon after that. In talking with House Leadership, I believe the bill could be on the House Floor in July.

Unfortunately, we've become too accustomed to the bureaucracy, the inefficiency, the billions squandered. But we can turn away from that – we're not too late.

Now is the time to recognize the government bureaucracy and an unreliable federal funding structure don't work. Now is the time to provide our aviation what it needs – to ensure that it will be a system that a growing number of passengers can count on for fewer delays and better service, a system that is more efficient in both its cost and its operation, a system that allows America to continue innovating, and remain the cutting edge leader in this field we originated.

Now is the time for a transformational change that provides a safe, reliable, modern aviation system for our future.

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