



March 16, 2007

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

As a broad cross section of the aviation industry, we are writing to you to convey our unified desire for Congressional action this year on authorizing the fundamental building blocks for the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen). Difficult choices need to be made if we are to provide the type of air transportation system to meet future needs. This is a matter of safety, efficiency and economic prosperity, and it is a matter of national priority as other nations are seeking to take away our long-held leadership in aviation and Air Traffic Control (ATC) infrastructure. It is truly a question of leadership and must be a priority for all of us.

We have an opportunity to move forward and use our creative and technological know how to develop the next generation air traffic system, using state of the art ground, air and satellite-based technology. This is not by any means a simple or easy task. Many choices must be made jointly by the government and the private sector. It is a multi-billion dollar problem, which presents huge opportunities for the U.S. government and industry to focus their best capabilities.

As the debate over the programs of the Federal Aviation Administration moves through the Congress this year, we acknowledge there are diverse opinions on many issues related to FAA Reauthorization. One thing that we all agree on is the need to fully transform our air transportation system.

Aviation accounts for over 10 million jobs in the U.S. and contributes approximately \$900 billion annually to the nation's gross domestic product. FAA and industry forecasts call for a doubling of commercial air traffic in the next 20 years. With the emergence of new, affordable aircraft, general and corporate aviation are also expected to steadily grow over the next two decades. In the future, aviation will play an even more influential role in our overall economy. Virtually all observers agree that the current system will not be able to meet this demand. As this important legislation is debated, the Congress must make our aviation system a priority by insisting on a new set of electronic "highways" in the sky, capable of accommodating the projected growth in traffic. We all must make sure that the path to achieving success is clear, that government and industry are held accountable, and that Congressional oversight continues to promote safe and efficient changes to the current system. Congress must hold each of the departments and agencies involved accountable, not just the FAA, but Defense, Commerce, NASA, and Homeland Security. All of these agencies have a key stake in moving forward with a new system, and a sense of urgency must be felt by

each of them. We also believe U.S. aviation competitiveness is at stake and Congressional direction is essential to the U.S. retaining its leadership role in this important sector.

The last FAA reauthorization legislation created the multi-agency Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) to plan and prepare for implementation of this key transformation. The JPDO has performed a valuable service thus far by outlining the need to move toward a net-centric, satellite and ground-based air transportation system that will be able to handle two to three times the amount of traffic. However, JPDO's plan for transformation has not equated specific action to resulting capability, and is based on an 18-year schedule. We believe the air transportation system is on a course for gridlock in the near future. In fact, certain segments of the system are experiencing gridlock today. As key stakeholders and users of the air transportation system, we want to work with you to communicate the sense of urgency to this multi-agency group and ensure decisions are made today to address this crisis. An implementation plan for NextGen, with date-specific milestones, is critically needed, with oversight through hearings and reports. We believe the FAA Reauthorization bill should call for the following regarding the development of the NextGen project:

- Accountability – Congress must ensure that all agencies participating in the JPDO are meeting their respective responsibilities in working toward the NextGen goal.
- Measure progress toward expanding capacity – Establish safety, capacity, efficiency and performance goals based on optimal system operations and measure actual operations against those goals.
- Public/private cooperation – Private industry must play a constructive role in helping JPDO/FAA achieve the vision of NextGen.
- Global harmonization – ensure global interoperability and continued U.S. aviation leadership.

While the administration's proposal is entitled the "Next Generation Air Transportation System Financing Reform Act of 2007," the bill is virtually silent on directing how the FAA, the JPDO and private industry need to move toward implementing this system. We believe the JPDO (and the FAA) need strong support and oversight from Congress to successfully transform our air transportation system.

This group is broad and diverse in its scope. We are united as industry in our commitment to work with the Congress in implementing the technologies needed to transform our current system into the NextGen. With the anticipated growth in air traffic here in the U.S. and around the world, we can not afford to wait. Time is of the essence and we stand ready to work with you and your respective staffs on defining and benchmarking this important transformation.