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Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good Morning. Pete, thank you for inviting me here today. I was able to tour the exhibit hall yesterday and ATCA has once again put on a great show.

Nearly a decade ago, at a time when I was still actively researching technologies to design aircraft wings and engines, the idea was emerging that the air traffic management system needed major advances that would not occur with business as usual. Ideas were growing from the administration, the congress and the aviation community at large. Back then, the effort was not called NextGen but nevertheless, it was the genesis of executing a transformation of the air traffic management system.

When I first met NextGen, it was in 2004, after the Vision 100 – Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act established a multi-agency Joint Planning and Development Office within the FAA. I was assigned by NASA as a member of the Air Navigation Services Integrated Product Team, and I understood that our job was to find a way to increase system capacity. Essentially, we were tackling a network problem in which demand was outstripping the system's ability to keep up. Without a fix, the system would bog down to an unacceptable service level and we'd eventually sink the economy. I think the early model was to set a broad vision for NextGen and then to define an evolutionary path leading toward that ultimate vision. As a researcher, I knew that a lot of rigorous R&D and many key experiments would be needed to set priorities and define a realistic path.

During the last decade, we've had many events affecting NextGen: September 11th; airline bankruptcies; the 2008 economic slump, concern about climate change and more. Each one of these changed our values and led us to promote different NextGen goals at different times – for example security after 9/11 and efficiency today. As our values changed, our focus drifted beyond the original network demand problem. But through it all, there still remains support for NextGen.

On September 21st, President Obama delivered remarks on innovation that were accompanied by a white paper that you can download from the Executive Office of the President. The paper calls for us to develop the next generation of air traffic control. Specifically, "the Administration supports moving from a ground-based radar surveillance system to a more accurate satellite-based surveillance system, the development of more efficient routes through the airspace, and improvements in aviation weather information." That's a pretty good nod from the top.

The white house paper goes on to say that "the FY2010 Budget provides $865 million for the Next Generation Air Transportation System in the Federal Aviation Administration." Speaking of budget, some of you may know that I actually sit within the

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs and CFO at the Department of Transportation. The FY2010 budget provides "an increase of close to $170 million from the fiscal year 2009 enacted level." And everyone - even me - has been working hard on the FY2011 budget development. That's because Secretary LaHood has told us that making NextGen happen is top priority. It's a topic we all see and hear in our daily interactions in the Office of the Secretary.

I'll give you an example. Last month, the FAA brought their display, "A Walk through NextGen," to the Department of Transportation atrium to give employees a closer look. Secretary LaHood and Deputy Secretary Porcari took the walk and stopped at each of the six transformational programs and at the JPDO interagency demonstration to discuss the various efforts with subject matter experts. Afterward, the Secretary spoke with the press, stressing the importance of economic and environmental benefits for aviation.

So to me, it's clear – the Administration is giving us the green light for implementing NextGen and we all have to press the pedal to the metal!

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. The FAA has the central role for implementing this system, but the FAA can't go it alone. Government and industry partners must hold up their corners of the tent too.

Early on, the governing legislation highlighted the need for participation by a broad spectrum of aviation experts in developing the integrated plan for NextGen. On my JPDO Integrated Product Team, government and industry experts sat side by side to create a vision from the bottom up. But it seems to me that nowhere have industry played a bigger role in NextGen planning then in the recent RTCA Task Force 5.

The FAA asked RTCA to define the steps needed to implement mid-term operational capabilities, and the RTCA used a defendable and repeatable process to do just that. I think one underlying theme from the study is that there are ways to implement NextGen that consider what is important to the user, not just in capability but also in approach and timing, and there are ways that do not. To develop a real partnership across the community, we'll need to focus on user and system benefits as opposed to technology improvements and we'll have to show tangible system performance improvements every couple years.

You know, it's kind of like collaborative decision making for traffic flow only here it's for investment decisions. Synchronizing government and industry investments and benefits in infrastructure and equipage is going to be really hard work. But right now is the time to work together to align the FAA implementation plan and the desires of the community.

A couple weeks ago, I heard Administrator Babbitt's opening remarks at the RTCA NextGen forum where he commented that the FAA is not focusing on near-term expediencies at the expense of longer-term goals. While the Task Force focused on accelerating the benefit from today's tools, we must forge ahead with delivery of tomorrow's capabilities.

I share that view, and it is the view that I must take in my NextGen coordination role for the Secretary and the Senior Policy Committee. Across government, Senior Policy Committee members – the heads of the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security and Transportation and of the FAA, NASA and the Office of Science and Technology Policy – these members together must lead the transformation to the 2025 national air transportation system.

Before I talk about the Committee, I feel I need to comment on the path to 2025. I often hear people say that there are two systems – that of the 2018 mid-term and that of 2025. Well, that simply can't be. I actually think we might have a unique opportunity right now to accelerate benefit with some early wins identified by the RTCA, bumping us onto one new path that will be set with clear and realistic goals for 2018 and 2025.

Back to the Senior Policy Committee which is chaired by the Secretary of Transportation. Just about a year ago, in November 2008, Executive Order 13479 placed clear accountability for NextGen with the Secretary and Senior Policy Committee by requiring them to report progress against measures to the President at least every two years.

Last month, our Committee met for the first time under the new administration. Every member attended. Secretary LaHood emphasized that the Committee is a critical means for multi-agency coordination. Discussion focused on areas of overlapping interest such as UAS and satellite structure. The conversation also focused on NextGen chronology and the timelines for accelerating benefits. All of the Committee members demonstrated a willingness to tackle the challenges of aligning and integrating policies and resources among our agencies to transform the national air transportation system.

Does NextGen matter? Yes, aviation is very important to our Nation's economy. Does anyone care about NextGen? Yes, the Administration and the Secretary have clearly shown their commitment to transforming the National Airspace System. Do we collectively have the will to make NextGen a reality? I can certainly tell you that when the next decade comes, I want to be able to say I helped implement NextGen and now I'm riding on a new technology wave! How about you?