

**Opening Statement of
The Honorable Steven M. Palazzo, Chairman
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
Hearing on
*A Review of the Federal Aviation Administration's Research and
Development Program*
Wednesday, February 16, 2011**

Good morning. I'd like to welcome everyone to today's hearing. We have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us who will discuss the Federal Aviation Administration's research and development program. And at the outset I wish to extend a sincere thank you to each of our witnesses for taking the time and effort to appear before us today. Please know that your testimony and wisdom will be of immense help to the Members of this Committee.

Our national air transportation system plays a critical role in every American's daily life, enabling aviation services to conveniently reach into virtually every corner of our nation. For cities and towns large and small, aviation has become essential to sustaining commerce, public safety, and leisure. It is a capability that has enabled our society to flourish in many ways and while economists have often spoken about the incalculable benefits that were enabled by the development of the interstate highway system, there is no doubt that aviation has had a comparable effect, stitching together virtually all regions and communities of our nation. Without a robust commercial air transportation system, many forms of commerce and intercity travel would be significantly diminished.

With that in mind, the Federal Aviation Administration's role of safely managing and regulating our national airspace system and its users is an enormous enterprise. Demand on the NAS has in the recent past strained FAA's ability to efficiently manage the system, in part due to limitations of the current radar-based system. We cannot afford to continue in this way; it simply can't absorb additional traffic that will surely come once our economy rebounds. Just yesterday the FAA released its annual forecast, predicting that air travel will double over the next two decades. FAA also predicts that the system will move one billion passengers annually by the year 2021, just ten years from now.

In the safety arena, FAA is confronting a wide spectrum of challenges such as developing the knowledge to ensure safe operations of aging aircraft, understanding the performance and failure modes of new materials used in aircraft structures, new automation systems, understanding man/machine interfaces and human factors, and researching and certifying new fuels for piston and turbine powerplants, just to name a few examples.

It is critical that FAA meet these challenges, and to do so, it must have a robust and well-managed research and development program that enables the agency to accommodate growth, and accommodate new technologies. This morning's hearing will give us an opportunity to hear

from industry experts and senior agency officials to help us understand the successes and obstacles FAA must confront as it continues to advance our nation's air transportation system.

It is critically important that FAA and its industry partners provide good rationale for agency-supported research projects and activities, and to justify the level of funding. These are uncertain times. Congress is facing enormous pressure to reduce the size of our budget deficit, and every federal activity will come under intense scrutiny, no matter how meritorious you and I might think they might be.

Thanks again to our witnesses. With that, I now recognize the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Costello, for his opening statement.

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