



November 20, 2009

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman,
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
US House of Representative
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Mica
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

We wanted to take the opportunity to follow up on the November 17th dialogue about the importance of modernizing the Air Traffic Control System. While we were having this discussion, Majority Leader Hoyer announced that the House of Representatives will take up consideration of a jobs package before the December recess which will include significant infrastructure spending. This follows the White House announcement that President Obama will host a Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth on December 3rd. As Congress begins consideration of legislation designed to create job growth, the undersigned associations representing the United States civil aviation and travel industries urge you to work with the House leadership to include funding for acceleration and deployment of the next generation of air traffic control (“NextGen”) capabilities, equipage and procedures. Congress should seize this opportunity to expedite NextGen capabilities and to provide a platform for domestic job creation thereby ensuring that the civil aviation and travel industries— which directly and indirectly generate over ten million jobs and \$1.2 trillion in economic activity annually—can continue to positively contribute to growth in the domestic economy.

As you know, our industries have experienced several shocks since the terrorist attacks of 2001, including a massive spike in oil prices and the current economic downturn. As a result, many of our companies have been forced to lay off valued employees. Since 2000, passenger carriers have shed almost 155,000 jobs, bringing us to our 1993 levels of employment. Manufacturers have sustained significant job losses and a slowdown in orders, deliveries, and production schedules. General aviation (GA) flying has decreased by as much as 35 percent. The inventory

of used GA airplanes available for sale reached an all-time high. Prices for GA airplanes have declined by 40 percent, and employment at leading general aviation companies has fallen by as much as 50 percent.

In this context and as the House moves forward in developing a jobs bill, we urge you to add funding for our nation's aviation air infrastructure. NextGen involves a fundamental transition from a ground based aviation infrastructure system (radar) to a satellite-based system enabling both controllers and flight crews to enjoy more accurate real-time information. The public benefits of accelerated NextGen are numerous and widely agreed upon: improved safety, job creation and retention, shorter flight times, reduced delays, and significant environmental benefits, including fewer carbon emissions, and less noise and improved local air quality.

Competitiveness Under Threat

Currently, the aerospace industry provides a significant positive contribution to our balance of trade. However, the U.S. competitive position is being challenged by other countries like the European Union, Australia and Canada, which are outpacing us in implementing NextGen. Other countries like China and India will look to either the U.S. or Europe for leadership as they develop their air traffic control system. If the U.S. does not demonstrate leadership in deploying these technologies, opportunities for U.S. manufacturers and workers will be lost.

Economic and Employment Impact

Accelerated NextGen funding will drive the nation's economic recovery and stimulate job growth across all sectors. The Joint Economic Committee has estimated that airline delays and congestion cost \$40 billion in lost productivity and time for passengers and our economy. Solving the congestion and delay problems through more direct flights and increased efficiencies will increase productivity across the nation and put a serious dent in that \$40 billion of lost productivity.

NextGen deployment will employ thousands of engineers, software developers and other high-tech workers to support a transition from a ground based radar infrastructure system to a satellite based infrastructure. In addition, pilots and other aviation jobs such as maintenance and installation jobs will benefit. A viable aviation sector enhances economic activity in a wide number of industries outside aviation including, among many others, travel and tourism and industries that rely on just-in-time global inventories and shipping capability.

Aviation in the Forefront of "Green" Initiatives

Accelerated NextGen implementation also has the potential to put aviation at the forefront of "green" initiatives. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has indicated that implementation of NextGen would reduce carbon emissions by up to twelve percent. This reduction in CO2 production is roughly equivalent to taking 2.2 million cars off the road for one year. In fact, a May 2008 GAO report recommended that NextGen technologies and procedures be deployed "as soon as practicable" to realize these environmental benefits.

This week President Obama challenged the public and private sector alike to find ways to accelerate job growth, stating that “during these difficult times we have a responsibility to consider all good ideas to encourage and accelerate job creation in this country.” Expedited NextGen investment will eliminate a significant drag on the nation’s economy and transform aviation into a powerful job creator in the near-term. With a commitment to fund expedited NextGen, we can provide a short term economic boost, and also provide the infrastructure which will lead to long term efficiencies and economic growth.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure inclusion of expedited NextGen funding in the jobs package which the House will consider before the December recess.

Sincerely,

Aerospace Industries Association
Air Carrier Association of America
Air Transport Association
Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association
Cargo Airline Association
General Aviation Manufacturers Association
National Air Carrier Association
National Air Transport Association
National Business Aviation Association, Inc.
National Business Travel Association
Regional Airline Association