

**Testimony by Susan M. Baer  
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Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Aviation  
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Chairman Petri, Ranking Member Costello, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am Susan Baer, Director of Aviation for the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.

Our bistate agency is responsible for some of the nation's most important transportation infrastructure assets, including the busiest commercial aviation system in the United States. This includes LaGuardia, John F. Kennedy and Stewart International airports in New York and Newark Liberty International and Teterboro airports in New Jersey. Together, these airports serve more than 107 million passengers annually. Approximately 20 percent of all U.S. flights operate through the New York metropolitan region's airspace.

I would like to begin by commending the members of this Committee for delivering on the long-awaited FAA Reauthorization. You have provided the aviation industry with the foundation necessary to advance critical initiatives and I appreciate the inclusion of metrics to help all of us analyze the benefits of NextGen.

I also want to thank Michael Huerta, the acting administrator of the FAA and a champion for the NextGen cause. He has made countless contributions through his work reorganizing the FAA's NextGen Office and as the Designated Federal Officer on the NextGen Advisory Committee. Together with Dave Barger, CEO of JetBlue who has led the NextGen Advisory Committee, they have provided thoughtful and necessary guidance on how to move the NextGen agenda forward, while including critical input from all stakeholders. I am proud to be a member of that committee.

I also was honored to be part of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's Future of Aviation Advisory Committee. NextGen was a fundamental element of nearly every conversation and a prevailing theme throughout all of the committees: Environment, Financing, Labor & Workforce, Safety and Competitiveness and Viability.

Ultimately, the committee delivered a series of NextGen-related recommendations that included:

- Advocating for investment to accelerate the installation of Next-Gen equipment at airports and aboard aircraft;
- Implementing policy and procedures to facilitate NextGen, including Best Equipped, Best Served;
- Confronting barriers to access, and using NextGen as a capacity-enhancing alternative for slot controlled airports; and
- Ensuring safety concerns are addressed before new NextGen procedures are implemented.

Very simply, our nation's air traffic control system is the same one that has been in use since the 1940s. GPS systems in New York City's taxicab fleet are more sophisticated than our radar-based air traffic control system.

Our country needs to implement NextGen and we need to do it now. Aviation drives our global economy. The cost of inaction is simply too great. It is no secret that the New York and New Jersey region's airports consistently rank at or near the bottom in on-time performance. While the problem often originates in our region, it certainly doesn't stop there. *One in three U.S. flights are affected by delays in the New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia airspace*, and 40-50 percent of national airspace ground stops and ground delays occur in New York. That means about half of all flights in the country held at the gate or delayed on the tarmac can trace their delays to one of our region's airports.

Delays are not just an annoyance. They cost money and stifle productivity. The ineffectiveness of our air transportation system has real economic consequences. Extra fuel, a new flight crew, hotel vouchers, missed meetings, extra meals at an airport, and so on. In 2010, a University of California at Berkeley study found that flight delays cost the United States \$32.9 billion a year. Unfortunately, the flying public bears the largest burden.

We need to implement NextGen in the New York/New Jersey region as soon as possible because that is where it can deliver the greatest benefit to the country. At the Port Authority, we have made important investments to make our airport system more efficient. At JFK, we have put in place a revolutionary and much-needed ground-management system in response to the relentless onslaught of delays that threatened to overwhelm the airport in recent years. That threat persists, not just at JFK, but at Newark and LaGuardia too, which is why we're working with the FAA to expand the program to those two airports. We know that at JFK alone, the ground metering system has saved nearly five million gallons of fuel and 14,800 hours of taxi time annually.

Over the last decade, our agency has invested more than \$1 billion to make airport ground operations more efficient. Our initiatives have delivered. We have invested with precision and a sharp focus on efficiency, building high-speed taxiway exits and multiple-entrance taxiways, minimizing runway occupancy time and enabling a more efficient queuing procedure. Our measures have helped avert tens of thousands of hours of delays. In turn, this has led to greatly reduced emissions and other environmental benefits that come from curbing delays and relieving congestion.

As we take steps to advance NextGen, we are making efforts to be better neighbors to those who live near our airports. We recently launched a single phone number that consolidates all our airports' noise complaint hotlines and a website that allows the public to express concerns about aircraft noise. These new systems provide feedback in real-time and help us to better understand the complexity of the problem. The standardized data repository also helps us collect and analyze noise complaints better than ever, giving us the ability to measure the number and origin of complaints, including which airport neighbors are making complaints. As we have in the past, we will share complaint statistics with the FAA to ensure the agency is aware of the volume and origin of complaints so it may consider operational adjustments, such as runway selection, if feasible.

All this is well and good, except there is only so much you can accomplish on the ground without corresponding improvements to our airspace. While we are in better shape today than we were a couple of years ago, in some ways, we are still stuck in neutral.

Today, my three major commercial airports effectively have a “No Vacancy” sign, because the federal government has capped the number of hourly operations we are permitted to handle. Until we can find new capacity—such as the improvements full implementation of NextGen will deliver—these massive economic engines are idling.

As a nation, we cannot afford that. Together, JFK, Newark and LaGuardia support nearly half a million jobs paying more than \$20 billion in annual wages and generating more than \$60 billion in annual sales and economic activity. We know airlines—both incumbent carriers and new entrants—want to expand air service in our market, but because of slot restrictions, they cannot. Our economists have calculated that for every one million potential additional passengers we fail to serve, 5,000 jobs do not get created.

Again: We cannot afford that, not in this economy, not in any economy.

I am a realist. I understand a wholesale revamping of the way our national airspace functions cannot happen overnight. As an aviation professional, I want to help advance and shape NextGen’s implementation, because inasmuch as the nation needs NextGen, I believe opening it in the New York/ New Jersey region will provide the greatest immediate nationwide benefit.

By attacking the problem where it is most acute, NextGen can deliver improvements to constituents from Green Bay to Tampa Bay ... Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine ... and all points in between. According to a 2010 GAO report, our three airports, along with Philadelphia, Atlanta, O’Hare, San Francisco, account for 80 percent of departure delays across the entire country. Fix it here ... at our airports and a few select others ... and you can fix the problem nearly everywhere.

Recognizing this is an issue of national urgency, in 2009, the Port Authority established the National Alliance to Advance NextGen, a coalition of business, civic and industry groups and organizations devoted to getting out the message about NextGen.

We continue to grow, and last month, we reached 1,000 members. In fact, the 1000<sup>th</sup> member was the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce from ranking member Costello’s home state.

In all, we have members from all 50 states, Washington D.C., the Virgin Islands, and 13 foreign countries—firms like Sherwin Industries from Wisconsin ... organizations like the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce ... AirDat LLC from North Carolina ... Klamath Falls Airports in Oregon ... The St. Louis Business Travelers Association ... and hundreds more.

Together, these organizations represent tens of millions of U.S. air travelers who are demanding improvements to our national air traffic control system through the implementation of NextGen technology.

In a time of tightened budgets and other fiscal restrictions, it will prove challenging to fully fund NextGen. But do we instead continue to risk the mounting challenges we will face as a nation stuck with a World War II-era, radar-based air traffic control system?

With so much at stake, I urge members of this committee and Congress to move quickly to implement NextGen technology. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey stands ready, willing and able to assist in any way we can.

Thank you.