NBAA

STATEMENT OF THE

NATIONAL BUSINESS AVIATION ASSOCIATION

ED BOLEN

PRESIDENT AND CEO

BEFORE

THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REGARDING

A REVIEW OF AND UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF FAA'S NEXTGEN PROGRAM

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Chairman Petri, Ranking Member Costello, members of the of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the National Business Aviation Association and RTCA, I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide our views on the future of our national air transportation system and the next generation air traffic control technology (Next Gen). As you know, I am the President and CEO of the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA). In addition, I am the immediate past chairman and current vice chairman of RTCA.

NBAA was founded 65 years ago to represent companies that utilize general aviation aircraft as a tool for meeting some of their transportation challenges. NBAA and our members are committed to working with the government to transform and modernize the nation's aviation system. Likewise, we are committed to policies that support the continued growth of each aviation segment, including general aviation, which plays a critical role in driving economic growth, jobs and investment across the U.S. We strongly support the shared goal of keeping our national aviation system the largest, safest and most efficient in the world.

General aviation is an essential economic generator, contributing more than $150 billion to annual U.S. economic output, and directly or indirectly employing more than one million people. Most general aviation aircraft operating around the world are manufactured and/or completed in the U.S., and our industry is continuing to build a strong American manufacturing and employment base that contributes positively to our national balance of trade.

I commend the Subcommittee for your commitment to improve our nation's aviation system and on-going efforts to foster economic growth and job creation during these challenging economic times. NBAA and all of the other members of RTCA strongly support these efforts and believe that the importance of a robust aviation system cannot be overemphasized.

Aviation, including general aviation, is a vital link in our transportation system and powerful engine for job creation and economic growth. Ensuring that the United States has the largest, safest, and most efficient air transportation system is clearly in our country's interest and should be a national imperative.

My testimony today will make four overarching points:

1. **RTCA helps forge the consensus voice of the aviation industry,** including general aviation, military and the airlines. RTCA should continue to be the forum for receiving FAA tasks, achieving industry consensus, and providing the FAA with consensus-based recommendations regarding NextGen.
2. **NextGen must provide clear benefits.** The general aviation community has begun to see the benefits of NextGen through the development and implementation of WAAS/LPV

approaches and T-routes. Creating new WAAS approaches and T-routes should continue to be a priority for NextGen implementation.

3. **NextGen raises significant cost realities for system users.** To address these realities, implementation should be benefits driven with a clear cost-benefit case that firmly establishes system requirements, incentivizes early adoption, and provides accountability through the establishment of a comprehensive timeline and budget.
4. **Maintaining legacy infrastructure during the transition to NextGen is critical to safety and ensuring access.** Consideration must be given to how existing infrastructure maintenance will be funded and managed.

Each of these points is addressed in detail below.

The role of RTCA

Founded in 1935 as the Radio Technical Committee for Aeronautics, RTCA works in response to requests from the FAA to develop comprehensive, industry-vetted and endorsed recommendations on a wide range of technical, operational, and policy issues related to air transportation. RTCA provides a forum in which all participants can be heard and provides the leadership to achieve consensus among all parties. In doing so, RTCA brings a single industry voice to the FAA on issues critical to the development and implementation of NextGen. I see this play out consistently in my role as vice chairman of RTCA and a member of the RTCA NextGen Advisory Committee (NAC).

The recommendations of RTCA's Task Force 5 have provided the basis for establishing industry needs and operator expectations during the transition from a ground-based to a satellite-based system. The FAA has subsequently created the NAC to provide relevant and actionable recommendations to implement NextGen. General aviation operators expect the transition to deliver tangible benefits through key technologies, including ADS-B, Datacomm, and Performance Based Navigation (PBN). The critical benchmarks for general aviation operators are increased all-weather access to airports nationwide, the ability to navigate efficiently through busy metroplex airspace when necessary, and the reduction of conflicts with commercial traffic operating at vital airports such as JFK, EWR, or LGA.

Continuing to address these recommendations and expectations is critical to ensuring that system users are equipped to operate in the NextGen environment and the necessary benefits are delivered to the user community. NBAA believes that RTCA should continue to be the forum for achieving industry consensus on FAA tasks and providing the FAA with consensus-based recommendations regarding NextGen.

The need for clear benefits and requirements

The general aviation community and RTCA recommendations agree that WAAS/LPV approaches that allow all-weather access to thousands of runway ends and T-routes that allow precise and efficient navigation through busy metroplex airspace are among the key early benefits of NextGen for a wide range of aviation users. The industry also concluded that RNP approaches should be implemented where beneficial or necessary.

General aviation users have begun to see clear benefits from the transition to a satellite based system with the establishment of performance based navigation including WAAS/LPV approaches and T-routes. As of July 2012, there were 12,131 approaches that rely on GPS operating in the United States, compared to only 6,628 ground-based instrument approaches. Where they have been established, T-routes provide more efficient and economical routing while reducing pilot and controller workload in busy terminal areas. T-routes can overcome the limitation of ground-based navigational aids, such as line-of-site requirements and signal reception. And, because of the accuracy of GPS signals, T-routes can offer lower minimum altitudes giving pilots more options for avoiding icing conditions, a major safety consideration for general aviation.

The early success of these efforts and the tangible benefits they deliver to system users should make continued development and implementation of WAAS/LPV approaches and T-routes an ongoing priority for the FAA, with a clear timeline established for completing the implementation process.

While the majority of general aviation aircraft are already equipped with GPS, and more than 74,000 WAAS-capable GPS units have been sold, additional equipment is needed to take advantage of the promised benefits of ADS-B and other system enhancements. At present, both the full costs and the ultimate benefits of equipping for these enhancements remain unclear.

Cost concerns

For general aviation users, the entire cost of equipping for NextGen must be borne by the aircraft owner or operator and cannot be passed along to passengers. Because the costs associated with equipping for NextGen are significant, operators need to be able to plan ahead for necessary expenditures. NBAA acknowledges the work that the FAA is doing to develop a plan on public-private partnerships and loan guarantees to incentivize Equipage. We have offered input to the agency and have encouraged them to move forward quickly on this critical initiative.

An integrated budget and timeline for achieving key NextGen milestones would help users determine how and when to equip their aircraft while adding accountability for the continued progress of NextGen implementation.

Currently, budgetary uncertainties and the lack of a single comprehensive timeline for achieving important implementation milestones leave users uncertain about what equipment will be needed, ultimately slowing adoption.

In addition, concerns over the prospect of sequestration have created an added level of uncertainty for system users. Potential cuts in FAA funding overall, and NextGen funding in particular, would have a severe impact on the NextGen implementation process.

Maintaining the legacy system

As we've seen, the final implementation of the NextGen air traffic system will not happen overnight. With so many uncertainties remaining, time will be required for the FAA to implement the system and train personnel to use the new technology, procedures, and policies. The aviation industry, too, will need time to understand the benefits; develop, manufacture, and install the necessary equipment; and train pilots in its use. In the meantime, existing ground-based infrastructure will serve a critical role in ensuring safety and providing access.

The FAA has committed to bringing stakeholders together on the development of a future navigation plan and components of that plan must include a "transition strategy" rather than a light switch approach. To that end, funding to maintain this legacy infrastructure must be established in order to ensure the continued safe operation of the national airspace system. This is particularly true in the face of potential sequestration budget cuts, which could impose long delays on NextGen implementation. It is critical that adequate attention be given to ensuring the maintenance and state of good repair to the legacy air traffic system - particularly in an environment in which sequestration may force spending cuts.

Conclusion

On behalf of NBAA and RTCA, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your leadership in ensuring that the ongoing investment in NextGen achieves its goals. NextGen modernization holds the promise of a safer, more efficient, more accessible, and more cost-effective national transportation system. By acting to ensure that NextGen implementation is managed responsibly and guided by industry consensus, you are protecting the extensive investment in this new approach to air traffic management and the many benefits that will accrue from a thoughtfully designed implementation process.