REMARKS FOR
THE HONORABLE NORMAN Y. MINETA
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

AERO CLUB OF WASHINGTON
"SECURING AMERICA'S PLACE AS GLOBAL LEADER IN AVIATION'S SECOND CENTURY"
WASHINGTON, D.C.
JANUARY 27, 2004

Good afternoon.

I appreciate the warm welcome. And thank you, Spencer Dickerson, President of the Aero Club, for that generous introduction.

Last month, I had the privilege of flying with President Bush to Kitty Hawk to celebrate the centennial anniversary of powered flight.

As the miles between Washington and North Carolina melted away, I could not help marveling that this great jet, *Air Force One*, relied on the same basic principles that the Wright Brothers had worked out for a little plane of canvas and wood.

As he often does, the President captured the essence of the moment that December morning when he proclaimed:

"The Wright brothers' invention belongs to the world, but the Wright brothers belong to America."

The United States has been at the forefront of aviation from the day the *Wright Flyer* made its first, fragile journey. We were first with powered flight, first with commercially successful jet airliners, first to put a man on the moon.

From that single plane and single flight, today more than nine million flights criss-cross the Nation carrying more than 628 million passengers a year.

Americans have become the most mobile society on earth.

The deregulation of commercial air transportation – and the Department's long-standing policy of seeking to facilitate new entry – have resulted in a diverse array of travel options available to the American public.

The 60-plus open skies and bilateral aviation safety agreements we have negotiated have helped airlines enhance safety, improve service, and lower prices in thousands of international aviation markets.

It would be hard to overstate the importance to the global economy of aviation and aerospace and the industries that fuel it.

Civil aviation represents 9% of the U.S. gross domestic product – exceeding 900 billion dollars and 11 million jobs!

And by many measures, the United States remains dominant in aviation and aerospace. However, in certain critical respects, our global leadership can no longer be assumed.

Today, new aviation initiatives are underway in Europe and elsewhere.

We are being challenged in manufacturing… and in satellite positioning and navigation services as Europe develops the Galileo system... an alternative to our own Global Positioning System.

We can work with our international partners to develop an interoperable aviation system that increases mobility. Or we can refuse to engage, refuse to lead, and thereby let others set the rules of the world's skyways.

We must not let that happen.

Therefore, in much the same way that President Eisenhower galvanized America's energies to build the Interstate highway system, I have launched an initiative to design the Next Generation Air Transportation System... A cleaner, quieter system based on 21st Century technology that will offer seamless security and added capacity to relieve congestion and secure America's place as global leader in aviation's second century.

It is urgent for industry, for labor, and for government – for all of the diverse interests that have built this thriving industry – to join together toward this common goal.

Make no mistake.

Unless we act now, our leadership is in jeopardy, and we could be facing gridlock in our national airspace.

Congestion across the aviation system is a problem that we were addressing before the horrific events of September 11th.

In the aftermath of those attacks, demand decreased and our efforts focused on increasing the security of air travel.

The good news is that the passengers are coming back, thanks to a combination of vastly improved security and a rebounding economy.

The bad news is that our system is again beginning to show signs of stress.

Last week, we took decisive action to help alleviate the growing problem of delays at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport – delays that were rippling throughout the entire system.

We secured the agreement of the two largest airlines serving that facility – United and American – to cut their peak operations by 5 percent.

While I am firmly convinced that this was the proper action under the circumstances, restricting and rationing service cannot be our long-term answer to congestion. We cannot allow government to get back into the business of regulating the economics of air transportation.

Chicago is a warning. But O'Hare is not the only place where we see congestion nearing the tipping point.

And unless we expand system capacity, it is almost certain that we will find ourselves facing more and more O'Hares as our economy continues to grow, and as new technology and competition brings even greater demand.

So I have challenged my Department to develop a comprehensive strategy to promote technology that will help reduce future air traffic delays, improve airport management, and maximize the safety and efficiency of our Nation's aviation system.

And we're going to do it, with your help.

The airport modernization legislation, VISION 100, recently signed into law by President Bush, will support $3.3 billion in grants for airport capacity, safety, and environmental improvements this year alone.

This year, we have $700 million in AIP funds ready to invest for congestion management to prevent gridlock in the skies.

Last year, we poured a lot of new concrete that added an extra 4% capacity. We commissioned four new runways in Denver, Miami, Houston, and Orlando. And we're far from finished.

Over the next five years, we have plans on the drawing board for seven new runways… as well as a runway extension in Cleveland. These projects will help add another 6.5% capacity to our system.

In the next two years, we're planning seven new air traffic control towers; six new terminal air traffic control facilities, or TRACONs; new advanced radar systems at 12 airports; and the state-of-the-art STARS air traffic control system at 16 airports.

And four major hub airports will be getting advanced weather satellite/radar systems to minimize weather-related delays.

But the successes realized through VISION 100 and the FAA's Operational Evolution Plan – as essential as they are to keeping up with demand over the course of the next decade – will not be sufficient to accommodate the air transportation market 15 or 20 years from now.

We cannot predict what aviation's future will bring. But whether it's unmanned aerial vehicles or micro-jets and "jet taxi" service, we do know that the system of the future will involve a great many more operations than we have today. The American people deserve a system that will readily accommodate that new demand – seamlessly and safely.

For that reason, we need something more. The changes that are coming are too big… too fundamental for incremental adaptations of the infrastructure.

If the United States wants to retain its global air transportation leadership – and we do – we need to modernize and transform our air transportation system – starting right now.

Our economy depends on it.

That is why we have kicked off our Next Generation Air Transportation System initiative.

We will harness technology in a way that triples the capacity of our aviation system over the next 15 or 20 years. With the forthcoming modernization of GPS, satellite navigation will be far more important to aviation than it is today.

We will develop enhanced on-board technologies that translate into more usable capacity in the system – and even higher levels of safety and security.

We will focus on ground facilities and procedures in order to accelerate the entire door-to-door journey.

Beyond the direct job creation for the airlines, airports, and manufacturers, the benefits will cascade down to other businesses that support aviation … including the travel and tourism industry and beyond.

We'll also see a change in the way America flies. It will be safer, designed to incorporate the new security requirements of the post-9/11 world while being virtually invisible to the customer. Travel will be more convenient and friendlier, with more options and less time at the airport. And flights will be able to leave and arrive on schedule.

I know that we won't see the full benefits of this activity before my tenure as Secretary of Transportation has ended.

Nevertheless, I am investing my personal time in this initiative because of its critical importance to the future of U.S. aviation. I've sat down with my counterparts in the Cabinet to enlist their support. And I chair the Senior Policy Committee that provides oversight of the project.

This is not just a Department of Transportation effort. Represented on the Senior Policy Committee – together with the FAA – are NASA and the Departments of Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security. The objective is nothing less than creating a unified vision of what our air transportation system can and should deliver for the next generation.

We've also established a Joint Planning and Development Office. It is based at the FAA, but enjoys the participation of all interested agencies. The JPO is developing the ideas and technologies that will take us to the aviation system of the future.

Leadership is important. And it gives me great pleasure to announce that Dr. John Hamre has agreed to head the FAA's Research, Engineering and Development Advisory Committee and lend his counsel to our efforts to build a vision for tomorrow's airspace system.

To be successful, we need *your* active participation as well. As the website for the Joint Planning and Development Office says, "new ideas are welcome." And we mean it. This is not the government's plan. It's America's plan.

As we move forward, we must draw on private-sector ingenuity. To secure America's place as global leader in aviation's second century, we need an air transportation system that supports a strong commercial capability, facilitates private-sector expansion, and creates jobs.

Without immediate and bold action, the bright dream that began at Kitty Hawk could soon become a nightmare of congested skies and frustrated travelers.

That is why we are acting now to modernize and transform our air transportation system and assure that this second century of aviation is one of promise and prosperity and continued leadership for America.

Thank you for being part of this tremendous effort. Travel safely. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

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