

## OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*“Transforming America’s Air Travel”*  
Space Subcommittee Hearing

June 11, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this morning’s hearing on “Transforming America’s Air Travel” and welcome to the chairmanship of the Space Subcommittee. I look forward to what I hope will be a strong, bipartisan partnership on addressing the important space and aeronautics issues facing our nation.

Mr. Chairman, as Members of Congress we fly a lot, often weekly, between our Districts and Washington, D.C. Like millions of other Americans who travel on commercial airlines, we can appreciate the importance of our nation’s strong safety record in civil aviation.

This record is the result of hard work and a steadfast commitment by the FAA and the civil aviation community to the safety of our nation’s airspace system, and I commend them on their dedication. However, as a Member of both this Committee and the Transportation Committee, I know that the world of aviation is rapidly changing.

New technologies and capabilities, such as unmanned aircraft systems, present significant opportunities for economic growth. Yet they also present challenges in their safe integration into the national airspace system.

And, while the NextGen initiative is intended to enable our aviation system to respond to growing capacity, it too has its own challenges. Pilots and air traffic controllers will need to interact with new sources of information and increased use of automated systems that will require changes in how they make decisions.

In short, Mr. Chairman, the changes to our aviation system will not be simply technological, they will be cultural. Because it is people who are at the heart of safety, and the ongoing transformation of aviation in the U.S. will require not just research and development, but also an evolution of our workforce and the training that we provide to it.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on what is needed to foster the skills that our workforce will need in order to fulfill the potential of new capabilities while mitigating any risks that the transformation of our aviation system will involve.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, aviation and aeronautics research is vital to the well-being of this nation. We need to ensure that NASA and FAA have the resources they will need to continue to make progress in the coming years.

It is an investment that will pay dividends far into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.