

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello
Acting Ranking Member

An Overview of the Office of Commercial Space Transportation's Budget for FY13

Tuesday, March 20, 2012
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing to review the Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) budget request for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST).

The successful growth of commercial human spaceflight activities can open new opportunities for commercial space, and I think we all hope for a vibrant future for the industry.

However, realizing and sustaining the promise of that industry will require close attention to safety.

As Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Aviation, I have a good appreciation of the expectations of the flying public.

The public needs a clear understanding of the risks involved with commercial space transportation, and it will need to be convinced those risks are being effectively managed.

FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation—AST—will be at the center of establishing those expectations, as it will have a critical role in ensuring the safety of would-be space tourists, and potentially even of NASA astronauts or other spaceflight participants.

Although commercial human spaceflight vehicles are in varying stages of design and development, important policy questions have yet to be resolved. To name a few:

How will safety regulations be developed?

Will the Government extend liability and indemnification protection to the new industry?

How will the safety of commercial operations on-orbit be managed?

Is AST's role as both a regulator and promoter of the commercial spaceflight industry still appropriate?

Mr. Chairman, I hope this is the first of many discussions that Congress, the FAA, and key stakeholders will have to address these important policy issues.

I look forward to hearing from Associate Administrator Nield on the challenges facing the AST and what actions, if any, are needed to help address those challenges.

In addition, I am interested in hearing Mr. Trafton's perspectives on AST's roles and responsibilities, especially in light of his past experience in leading NASA's human spaceflight activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.