

OPENING STATEMENT

SPACE & AERONAUTICS SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JERRY COSTELLO [D-IL]

*An Overview of the NASA Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate's
Budget for Fiscal Year 2013*

April 26, 2012

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this important hearing on the FY 2013 budget request, challenges, and priorities for Aeronautics, and welcome our witnesses.

Congress has tasked NASA to maintain, and I quote from the 2010 NASA Authorization Act, “*a strong aeronautics research portfolio ranging from fundamental research through systems research*”. More importantly, the Act stresses NASA’s need to perform research in airspace capacity, environmental sustainability, and aviation safety.

For the past several years, however, NASA has not received the necessary funding to fulfill those objectives. This is unfortunate, because NASA has an integral role in enabling the strength of the U.S. aerospace industry and, in partnership with FAA, the safety of the flying public.

As Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure’s Aviation Subcommittee, I am keenly aware of NASA’s importance to U.S. aerospace and aviation. A strong aerospace industry enables the United States to defend itself, compete in the global marketplace, maintain a highly skilled workforce, and provide safe and secure travel to all Americans. According to the latest figures available, aviation manufacturing and services accounted for \$445 billion in direct and indirect economic activity in 2006. Aviation provided the Nation with a trade surplus of \$57.4 billion in 2008.

The explosive growth of aviation over the last several decades has also brought its own set of challenges. These include dealing with the increasing congestion of the Nation’s airspace system, the need to maintain safety in the face of increasing travel demand, and the need to mitigate the negative impacts of aviation on the environment--whether noise, increasing energy consumption, or harmful emissions.

NASA’s aeronautics research programs are addressing these challenges and I hope to learn more about their progress, because these challenges are at the crux of the major transition underway in modernizing the Nation’s air transportation system—NextGen.

We must focus on NextGen research that will ensure that the Nation's air traffic management system will be able to meet anticipated demand while preserving safety and making the whole experience a lot more pleasant than it is now for the average traveler. We also need to focus on developing technologies that can make aircraft much more energy efficient and produce lower levels of harmful emissions. And we need to focus on research that will ensure that we maintain the high level of safety that we have enjoyed in our aviation sector.

However, the continued decline in NASA's aeronautics funding is making it difficult to maintain an aeronautics research program that will be capable of stepping up to the challenges the Nation's aviation sector is facing.

Our witnesses today will probably agree with me that carrying research to a level of maturity that allows the results to be transitioned to the users—whether private or public sector—is critical and requires a greater level of investment than is currently made. If promising technologies and operational concepts *aren't* matured to the point that they can be transitioned to the users for further development or implementation, the Nation will never receive the full benefit of the investment that it has made in that research.

I understand that we are in tough economic times. But I hope that this hearing will illustrate how NASA's aeronautics research provides a sizeable return on the taxpayer's investment.

So I am eager to hear from our witnesses on how we can ensure that NASA's aeronautics research remains vibrant, relevant to the Nation's needs, and contributes to maintaining U.S. leadership in aviation

Mr. Chairman, we must keep aeronautics a priority.