Remarks Prepared for Delivery
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Thank you, MIT and Boeing for this timely and valuable conference. The conference planners have put together an excellent agenda, outstanding speakers — expertise from across the aviation community. This is exactly the multidisciplinary approach that we need — we must draw on the best minds in academia, industry, and government to identify problems, to fashion solutions. No one sector of the aviation community has the answer, but as we've seen before, when we bring stakeholders together and work toward common goals we can realize enormous benefits.

Last March, I spoke at another MIT gathering. That was a workshop MIT put on with the University of Maryland. Amedeo and Michael Ball lined up experts who spoke about congestion, about delays, about demand exceeding supply — the vexing problems facing aviation at the turn of the century. At that time, the aviation community's top concern was delays, how they diminished productivity, hindered our nation's ability to compete. This was the topic of seminars, of congressional hearings. The FAA and the aviation community took action. We improved our Spring Summer plan. We changed procedures. We aggressively pursued greater use of technology. We instituted a lottery at LaGuardia, the nation's number one delayed airport.

Last March, we all struggled with how to keep aviation on the move and efficient. Those concerns — at the time so important, so pressing — pale with what we have been dealing with past six months. A year ago, who among us could have imagined what we in aviation have faced — and have accomplished — since September 11? The threat to our freedom of mobility … the heightened security measures ... the transition to a new — *and a very necessary* — Transportation Security Administration.

Much was written about the six-month anniversary of the terrorist attacks. One of the themes was the resiliency of the American people. As the President has said, "We will not falter and we will not fail." I am confident aviation will prevail. It will prevail because of people like you — professionals who do so much and who are so committed to aviation.

Earlier this month, the FAA released its annual forecast. We all know the bad news. Last year's recession, followed by the terrorist attacks, delivered a one-two punch to commercial aviation. Traffic, yields, revenue — all down.

The good news is that this year's decline will be followed by a strong recovery in 2003. And that recovery will continue with traffic returning to more normal growth rates by 2004. Those one billion annual passengers we've been projecting are still on the horizon. Now, they are not expected until 2013. But they will come. Air travel will rebound. Aviation is simply too integral — to our economy — to the fabric of our society — to our quality of life. Already, we're seeing encouraging signs. Airlines are adding markets. They are increasing frequencies. Passenger loads are up.

Yet, from where we sit in air traffic control, traffic is coming back at different rates in different regions and at different hubs. Aside from Salt Lake with its Olympic demands, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Charlotte, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh are seeing the strongest recovery. Other airports, such as O'Hare, are busier at certain times of the day than they were before September 11. At many airports, we are seeing an extraordinary performance by the regional air carriers. Soon enough, the aviation community will again be faced with the challenge of meeting demand.

Secretary Mineta has spoken frequently about the need to close the gap between demand for air travel and the capacity of our transportation infrastructure. *That need is just as strong today.* The FAA is determined to do its part to be ready. It has been right to view our priorities through the prism of September 11. But, we must plan today for growth tomorrow. We must maintain the momentum and build a 21st century aviation system.

A 21st century aviation system must be reliable. It must be safer still. And, a 21st century aviation system must be able to meet growing demand. Our plan has three elements — greater reliability, improved safety features, and expanded capabilities.

For reliability, we've made great strides in the past five years. How many remember Secretary Pena holding up a vacuum tube and talking about our nation's hopelessly out-of-date ATC system? He could not do that today. We have replaced, replenished, and renewed — across the board, across the nation. And, unlike previous approaches to modernization — grand multi-year, multi-billion dollar programs (not unlike other over-ambitious government programs) we are doing things differently.

Over the past five years, we've taken a more realistic, deliberate, building-block approach. We are taking one clear step at a time. And it's working. We replaced the computers that drive the system. We're putting in new displays where controllers see the traffic. We finished this for all the enroute centers. Now we're focused on the terminal area. Just last week, I was in Memphis to celebrate the first production unit of the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System. STARS replaces existing radar scopes with a full-color digital radar display. This updates the terminal area controller's tools from the 1970's to the 21st century in a single leap.

All this new hardware and software … what does it mean for reliability? The National Airspace System is now available 99.6 percent of the time. That is a remarkable record for a system that operates 24/7.

For safety, we all know it's critical to get controllers and pilots more and better weather information. It's accurate and quick weather data that can do so much to enhance safety as well as help assure more predictable operations. It's bad weather that creates the most havoc for airline schedules and performance.

We're exploiting technology. By this summer the last of 45 Terminal Doppler Weather Radars at major airports will go into service at JFK and Midway. More windshear detection equipment — weather system processors — are going in at smaller airports. Albuquerque will get the first of 34 systems by the end of April. Last November, we commissioned that last of 569 Automated Surface Weather Observing Systems in New Haven, Connecticut.

As for expanding capacity to meet growing demand, the centerpiece of our efforts is the aviation community's Operational Evolution Plan. This is the ten-year implementation plan for FAA, airports, and airlines. It includes runways, technologies, and procedures. The goal: increase capacity by up to 30 percent, or some 700 – 800 more flights in the air at a given time during normal operating hours. The OEP is goal-driven and measurable. We are building on the rigorous approach to measurement we developed with Free Flight Phase 1. We are prepared to drop a project if it is not producing benefits. Last fall, we reexamined the OEP through the prism of September 11. The revised version lays out realistic expectations based on *who* has the ability — to do *what* — and *when*. This version, released December 31, represents FAA and industry revalidation of commitments.

We've already had successes:

- With its new runway, Detroit Metro can handle 36 more flights per hour in good weather — a 25 percent increase.
- Conflict probe is now in use at four enroute centers. Controllers say this tool is the biggest step forward in the enroute environment in their careers. More direct routings reduce emissions and save money. At the Indianapolis and Memphis centers, conflict probe generates monthly airline savings of more than $1.5 million dollars.
- By adding sectors, changing airspace, we've made great progress addressing chokepoints — or bottlenecks — in the congested mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes airspace. Delays are down about 25 percent.

In a recent report, the GAO said, "The FAA has made a good start in developing the OEP and in taking the initial efforts to implement it."

A good start is important. What is more important is staying the course. Just like Free Flight Phase 1, which was signed, sealed — and delivered this year — the OEP continues the collaborative, consensus-based approach that has been so successful to achieving crucial safety and efficiency benefits. This approach is essential as we move forward with coordinated investment strategies by government, airports, and airlines. The aviation community speaking with one voice — and working collaboratively on a strategic, targeted plan — is even more compelling in the face of enormous demands on resources.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is the user investment to adopt new technology. The voluntary investment of $11.1 billion by airlines to equip and train is nearly equal to the government's price tag of $11.5 billion. The price is high; the benefits will be enormous. The measurement tools will provide the business case for these investments.

We are laying the groundwork that will allow us to close the gap — and safely and efficiently meet demand in the second century of aviation.

Last month, I heard historian David McCullough speak about John Adams, the subject of his most recent biography. McCullough eloquently makes the point that with "change accelerating all around, more and more we need understanding and appreciation of those principles on which the republic was founded."

We should know more about the patriots who pledged "their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor" to the rebellion." Who were those people? What was the source of their courage?

His book on John Adams shines a light on this patriot and leader. McCullough says one line that Adams used again and again is key to understanding his intellectual reach. Adams would say, "In everything, one must see the end", the goal.

For all of us in aviation — we see the goal. We see a system that is safe — that is secure — and that is efficient — and that continues to be the best in the world.

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