
Very Light Jets: Several Factors Could Influence Their Effect on the National Airspace System

**33rd Annual FAA Aviation Forecast Conference
March 11, 2008**

**Faye Morrison, Assistant Director
Physical Infrastructure Team
U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)**

About GAO

- GAO is known as the “investigative arm of Congress.”
 - GAO’s work includes:
 - oversight of federal programs;
 - insight into ways to make government more efficient, effective, ethical, and equitable; and
 - foresight into long-term trends and challenges.
 - Each year, GAO issues hundreds of reports covering a wide range of topics.
 - In fiscal year 2007, GAO testified 276 times before Congressional committees.
-

GAO's Very Light Jets (VLJ) Report

- Report was issued August 24, 2007.
 - Requesters were:
 - The Honorable John Mica (House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee)
 - The Honorable Jerry Costello and the Honorable Thomas Petri (House Aviation Subcommittee)
 - Our work was conducted from September 2006 through August 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.
-

Our VLJ Research Questions

1. What are the current forecasts for very light jet deliveries and what factors could affect very light jet deliveries?
 2. How might increasing numbers of very light jets affect the capacity and safety of the national airspace system (NAS)?
 3. How is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) planning to accommodate the entry of very light jets into the NAS?
 4. What factors will influence very light jets' effect on FAA's costs and Trust Fund revenues?
-

Q1: What are the current forecasts for VLJ deliveries and what factors could affect VLJ deliveries?

- GAO examined eight forecasts from government, aviation manufacturers, and aviation consulting firms.
 - Predictions for VLJ deliveries ranged from 3,016 to 7,649 and the timeframes for these predictions ranged from 2016 to 2025.
 - Factors that might affect the number of VLJ deliveries included the development of the air taxi market, economic growth, and insurance and training requirements, among others.
-

Q2: How might increasing numbers of VLJs affect the capacity and safety of the NAS?

- Two studies (one by NASA and one by MIT) concluded that the type and location of airports used by VLJs will influence VLJs' effect on capacity.
 - Experts noted that the effect on capacity will be influenced by uses of VLJs, the implementation of NextGen technologies, and the rate of integration of VLJs.
 - Experts felt that VLJs would have little overall effect on safety.
-

Q3: How is FAA planning to accommodate the entry of VLJs into the NAS?

- Overall, FAA believes it already has procedures and policies in place to successfully integrate VLJs into the NAS.
 - FAA has developed a cross-organizational group to facilitate agency coordination on VLJs.
 - Experts cited FAA's inspector resources as an area of concern and noted the need for FAA to continue to move forward with the implementation of NextGen technologies.
-

Q4: What factors will influence VLJs' effect on FAA's costs and Trust Fund revenues?

- What type of aircraft, if any, will VLJs replace?
- For which type of operations—commercial or non-commercial—will VLJs be used?
- Where and when will VLJs be flown?

Summary

- Overall, it is too soon to predict with any certainty the effect that the introduction of VLJs will have on the national airspace system. Much depends on the level of success of the air taxi market.

GAO's VLJ Report

- VLJ report is GAO-07-1001.
- All GAO reports and testimonies are available online at www.gao.gov.