



Highlights of [GAO-08-1154T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Science and Technology, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

To prepare for forecasted air traffic growth, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in partnership with other federal agencies and the aviation industry, is planning and implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), a new, satellite-based air traffic management system that is expected to increase the safety and enhance the capacity of the air transport system. NextGen will replace the current radar-based air traffic control (ATC) system. Within FAA, the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) is responsible for implementing the transition to NextGen, and ATO's Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) is coordinating efforts to plan for this transition, including developing a 20-year research and development (R&D) agenda for NextGen. JPDO has drafted three basic planning documents for NextGen—a Concept of Operations, an Enterprise Architecture, and an Integrated Work Plan (IWP).

This testimony responds to six questions about NextGen and JPDO raised by the House Committee on Science and Technology, and addresses two related challenges identified by GAO. The statement is based on recent related GAO reports and testimonies, including a report issued today that reflects GAO's analysis of interviews with 25 key NextGen stakeholders about progress and challenges involved in the transition to NextGen.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-1154T](#). For more information, contact Gerald L. Dillingham at (202) 512-2834 or dillingham@gao.gov.

NEXT GENERATION AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Status of Key Issues Associated with the Transition to NextGen

What GAO Found

Have the Views of Industry and Air Traffic Controllers Been Adequately Incorporated in NextGen Planning Documents? FAA and JPDO have established mechanisms for obtaining stakeholder views. However, given the large number of NextGen stakeholders and the evolution of opportunities for participation in NextGen, we believe that stakeholders will continue to differ on how adequately their views have been incorporated in NextGen planning.

Is the Current Version of IWP Sufficiently Detailed for Effective Use in Overseeing and Managing NextGen? No. The current version lacks some needed information, but the next version, to be released this month, is to contain more detail, including schedule information, and is automated and searchable, making it more user friendly and useful for oversight.

How Confident Should Congress Be that IWP Will Provide a Sufficient Basis for Achieving NextGen's Goals? The current plan does not provide a sufficient basis for Congress to be confident. The upcoming version will provide a firmer basis for confidence, but additional R&D issues that are not part of the plan will have to be addressed, including technology transfer issues.

Can JPDO Continue to Be Viewed as an "Honest Broker" in Light of FAA's Recent Restructuring? The restructuring made JPDO a component of ATO rather than an independent office, but other federal agencies are reportedly still cooperating with JPDO, suggesting that they continue to view it as an honest broker. However, it is too early to tell if the restructuring addresses stakeholders' concerns about the fragmentation of management responsibility for NextGen activities.

What Needs to Be Done to Move JPDO from Proposing R&D to Articulating a Clear R&D Program with Defined and Prioritized Tasks? The move is underway. JPDO needs to continue collaborating with its partner agencies to identify and prioritize R&D and leverage their R&D programs. It is too soon to assess the results of steps JPDO and the partner agencies have taken thus far.

What Metrics Should Congress Use to Evaluate the Progress of NextGen? Schedule information in the upcoming version of IWP and cost information in the subsequent version will help provide Congress with metrics for evaluating NextGen's progress.

Additional Infrastructure and Human Capital Challenges Identified by GAO. NextGen's implementation further depends on FAA's reconfiguring and maintaining its ATC facilities, expanding runways, and hiring staff with the engineering and contract management skills needed to provide oversight.