



Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Audit Announcement – FAA
Progress in Deploying Controller Automation Tools
for Performance-Based Navigation Flight
Procedures
Federal Aviation Administration
Project No. 14A3007A000

Date: July 1, 2014

From: Matthew E. Hampton
Assistant Inspector General
for Aviation Audits

Reply to: JA-10
Attn. of:

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

A cornerstone of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) is its initiative to enhance efficiency and capacity at congested airports through the use of performance-based navigation (PBN). PBN delivers new routes and flight procedures that primarily use satellite-based navigation and on-board aircraft equipment to navigate with greater precision and accuracy. As such, PBN can provide significant near-term benefits such as more direct flight paths, improved on-time airport arrival rates, greater fuel savings, and reduced aircraft noise. According to a recent Government/industry report on NextGen priorities,¹ optimizing the use of PBN procedures should be FAA's top NextGen priority. Although nearly 50 percent of major airlines' aircraft and pilots are equipped and trained to use advanced PBN procedures, use of these procedures remains low.

A key barrier to increasing PBN use and achieving benefits is FAA's lack of automated tools that would allow air traffic controllers to merge and sequence aircraft with differing equipment and capabilities. Concerned with the long history of delays in deploying new systems for NextGen, the Chairmen of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Subcommittee on Aviation asked us to assess FAA's progress in deploying these tools. Accordingly, our audit objectives are to assess (1) FAA's progress in developing and deploying new air traffic controller

¹ NextGen Advisory Committee, *NextGen Prioritization: A Report of the NextGen Advisory Committee in Response to Tasking from the Federal Aviation Administration*, September 2013.

automation tools for managing PBN procedures, and (2) the degree to which these tools meet air traffic controllers' needs to improve PBN use.

We will conduct our work at FAA Headquarters, field facilities, and other relevant sites. We plan to begin the audit this month, and we will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-0500 or Robin P. Koch, Program Director, at (404) 562-3770.

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cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1
FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100