

ALPAToolbox

ALPA, NATCA Co-Host NextGen Symposium: Users' Perspective

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Approximately 100 ALPA safety representatives, air traffic controllers, and representatives of government and industry gathered on June 27 in Washington, D.C., with about 600 more participating online, to discuss and debate key issues of NextGen implementation, with a specific focus on how end users—pilots and controllers—can affect (and will be affected by) the continuing development of the program to modernize the U.S. air traffic control system. ALPA and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) co-hosted the one-day symposium.

Staking out the issues



Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.), chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee,

acknowledged that “most members of Congress don’t know much about NextGen, nor does the general public,” which is why he and other members of Congress have recognized the need for “stakeholder listening sessions” through which Congress has gathered input from key aviation stakeholders. NextGen, LoBiondo declared, has “so much at stake for the nation—and for you, individually, as pilots and controllers.” He warned, “We cannot afford any slippage” in the NextGen schedule and vowed to con-

tinue to work diligently toward its implementation.



Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA’s president, declared, “The time to act decisively to move NextGen

forward is now—right now.” He added, “We need a paradigm shift from ‘first come, first served’ to ‘best capable, best served.’ We need incentives for our airlines to equip with the latest technology to enable NextGen; strong, consistent leadership in our federal government; and a steady stream of funding for NextGen.”



Paul Rinaldi, NATCA’s president, warned, “Sequestration is going to have a gigantic effect

on NextGen—it’s the ‘kryptonite’ of NextGen.” Rinaldi and Moak both serve on the NextGen Advisory Committee (NAC), a government-industry group that reviews NextGen status and provides recommendations to the FAA.



Capt. Sean Cassidy, ALPA’s first vice president and national safety coordinator, said,

“We need to expand beyond the bubble we work and live in” and communicate the message about the need for NextGen to a broader audience, including the general public.

Capt. Charles Hogeman (United), ALPA’s aviation safety chair, said ALPA has

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NextGEN

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three core values regarding NextGen: “We want NextGen to improve safety, we want



pilot-centric solutions, and we want global interoperability.” He also stressed, “ALPA policy

is very clear: The primary means of separation must be by well-trained, professional air traffic controllers.”

The next five years?

Panelists representing various NextGen stakeholder interests provided perspectives on the value already added by NextGen and the promise of future development. Another panel discussed the critical need for establishing a steady, reliable, independent stream of funding for NextGen, agreeing unanimously that the current funding system is “broken.”

Moderating the final panel, Cassidy asked, regarding NextGen, “What’s a successful 2018 look like?”



Pam Whitley, FAA acting assistant administrator for NextGen, replied, “Keeping the commitments as you see

them laid out in the NextGen Implementation Plan, making advancements in things like ADS-B Out, having the initial state of datacomm in place, continuing deployment of [new] procedures where they’re needed most, improving operations at metropolitan areas where we have multiple airports, and beginning to make progress on the city pairs.”



Mike Caflich, director of airspace programs/digital aviation, commercial aviation

services, Boeing, said, “All the performance metrics that we’ve established have been met.”



Dan Elwell, senior vice president for safety, security, and operations, Airlines for America,

ventured, “The economy will be going gangbusters; the demand for air travel will be back up. The *impetus* will be there to get [NextGen] done.”

Cassidy agreed, saying, “I choose to be an optimist, but we still have an awful lot of work to do. We simply cannot afford the price of inaction.”