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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
TO THE REGIONAL AIRLINE ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
APRIL 24, 1985

It is a privilege to meet again with the leadership of this nation's regional airlines, an industry officially recognized by the government only 16 years ago. Yet in that short time, you have sustained such dramatic growth that today no one can dispute the fact that this industry is truly a full partner in our air transportation system. Your success story is a tribute to innovation, good service and an ample measure of perseverance.

The record of the regional airlines speaks for itself, and it is one in which you justifiably take great pride. In 1984, regional airlines served over 98 percent of the airports receiving scheduled airline service, and at more than 70 percent of those airports you provided the only air service. Last year regional airline traffic rose by a record 20 percent as you carried over 26 million passengers to their destinations.

These numbers are as important to us as they are to you, because they are proof that this is a time of exciting opportunities in the industry. American aviation has begun a great new era of freedom, flexibility and advancement.

I believe we share a common vision of aviation in America: one of continued growth and unparalleled safety. I have come here today to open a discussion on the future of aviation, so that we might work together in charting the future of the airspace system and the industry it serves.

As Secretary of Transportation, my vision of American aviation extends from the sports enthusiasts in ultralights, experiencing the sheer exhilaration of flight; to the private pilots in general aviation; to the multi-billion dollar scheduled airline industry; and beyond to the unlimited potential of the commercialization of space. The aviation marketplace is filled with a spirit of enterprise and of striving for excellence that will not be exhausted.

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Amidst all the change in American aviation, one thing remains constant: our commitment to maintaining the safest skies in the world. Our national air system is first and foremost a safe system, and I will spare no effort to keep it that way.

While my commitment spans all forms of transportation, one of my first initiatives in the Department was to focus on aviation safety. The very successful "white glove" inspections by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) last year told us that the vast majority of the nation's airlines are complying with federal safety regulations. We looked into every aspect of airline operations. And our inspection of 350 air carriers found -- overall -- very safe operations throughout the industry.

We then turned to an intensive general aviation safety audit. Since last July, FAA inspectors have been looking at pilot schools, flight instructors, pilot examiners, repair stations and Part 135 air taxis. Because of the complexity and size of general aviation -- which includes some 210,000 active aircraft -- we projected this audit would take 12 to 18 months to complete. Yet we have already gained a great deal of useful information about patterns and trends which will be factored into our ongoing regulatory responsibilities in the safety area.

Because this sort of vigilance has rewarded us with such good results -- the "white glove" program accomplished a full year's worth of safety inspections within 90 days -- I am announcing today several more initiatives to raise our safety standards even higher.

We are evaluating sending to Congress a proposal for new legislation to increase penalties on parties who knowingly falsify airline safety records. Any such grave disregard for passengers' lives requires stiffer punishment.

Secondly, I am directing the FAA to establish a new confidential telephone line for reporting safety violations. Too often we have had indications that individuals with information about safety violations do not contact the FAA for fear of being identified. Our new hotline will permit those with knowledge of false recordkeeping or other unreported violations to alert federal officials without fear of recrimination. Hotline reports of violations will be cross-checked and verified to insure accuracy before action is taken.

I also want the public to know that since the beginning of the year, we have been placing a new emphasis on safety inspections of the airlines. The new emphasis focuses on inspections being carried out without prior notice and with greater attention than ever before on the aircraft themselves -- going beyond an airline's recordkeeping.

The public must be assured that the highest standards of excellence in safety apply whether a passenger is traveling in a nine-seat commuter craft, the largest of jumbo jets, or anything in between. Whether the service is short-haul or coast-to-coast, no-frills or luxury, nothing less than first-class safety performance will be the accepted standard. In carrying out this program, I know the industry shares my concern for safety and it is a pleasure to be able to deal with responsive groups such as the Regional Airline Association on this issue.

Safety can never be compromised, especially at a time when airspace and terminal capacity needs must be addressed -- not only in this period of strong industry growth -- but for the years ahead. In the regional airline industry alone, revenue



passenger miles are forecast to triple between 1983 and 1995; passengers carried are expected to more than double and the total commuter fleet will grow by about 69 percent.

In a report on national aeronautical goals just released by the White House, the President's Science Advisor, George Keyworth -- working with a distinguished committee -- has set out a series of challenges for the entire aerospace industry, indeed for all of us.

In reviewing future needs, the study group determined that lasting U.S. aeronautical leadership "will only be secured by the vigorous renewal of America's traditional strength: pioneering new technology." That committee challenged the U.S. aeronautical industry with three goals designed to build momentum towards securing the research and technology to achieve a trans-century renewal of the nation's total aeronautical capacity. The committee framed the goals in terms of pursuing technology for a new generation of fuel-efficient subsonic aircraft, a long-range supersonic transport and space shuttle or hypersonic craft with the capability to take off and land from conventional runways. The committee recognized the initial focus would necessarily be on the advancement of a subsonic aircraft. This entirely new generation of fuel-efficient, affordable U.S. aircraft is envisioned as operating in a flexible and modernized National Airspace System. Simply stated, our aim is a safe, congestion-free U.S. aeronautical interstate system, offering superior air transportation at half its current cost. Accelerating subsonic technology can leverage unique advantages for the United States, by capitalizing on the pioneering efforts in airspace modernization and deregulation already in the national agenda. Our National Airspace System (NAS) Plan is an essential component and we must maintain cohesiveness and flexibility in our planning in order to keep pace with these future aircraft technologies.

The NAS Plan -- as you know -- is our long-range, \$11.7 billion program to modernize the nation's airways. It will increase the capacity of our airspace, greatly improve the safety of flight operations and provide more precise landing systems. And it is being paid for by those who use the air traffic control system. We estimate the NAS Plan will actually save almost \$20 billion by the year 2000, through reduced operating and maintenance costs, and it will save users an additional \$10 billion through lower costs and fewer delays. As big as the NAS Plan is now, it's only a beginning. We certainly will be looking at new technology as it moves along, incorporating these advances into future plans and responding to these challenges.

At present, the majority of the projects in the NAS Plan have been launched, and the momentum of the total program is increasing rapidly. We are less than two years away from installing the first microwave landing system (MLS). With this system, we will be able to depict the glideslope so accurately that on final approach, the aircraft can be within one tenth of one degree of the centerline. We are also looking into loaning several MLS receivers to commuter carriers for further evaluation, because we know of your interest in the equipment. Let me add too that we have reviewed our Instrument Landing System (ILS) policy and recently requested permission from our Congressional oversight committees to make a very limited number of new ILS installations available to meet critical interim needs. In addition, several of the aviation groups have developed an airport capacity assessment of the 22 pacing airports. That proposal offered further suggestions for interim ILS, other navigation aids and airport construction needs. We have completed a preliminary review of the report and -- while many of the suggestions seem reasonable -- we are continuing to



work with those groups and the airport operators to address those projects which are feasible. The industry has engaged in a highly valuable effort to target important needs. We understand the industry's concerns and want to respond rapidly and specifically to its proposals.

The NAS Plan, which we are implementing over the next decade, is based on current technology. By the time the NAS Plan is fully operational, new technologies will be available. We are now preparing university research contracts specifically to look beyond the NAS Plan. This research will examine the types of computer and telecommunications technologies likely to be available at the start of the 21st century. Voice data entry, artificial computer intelligence and satellite navigation systems were the subjects of science fiction when many of us were growing up, but they will be integral components of our air traffic control system during our lifetimes. We must stay on the cutting edge of technology to safely and efficiently accommodate air traffic growth, and the Department is continuing its efforts to insure that we do so.

We are also working continually to maximize the potential of the air traffic control system by reviewing and updating procedures both for the controllers and for pilots. One element of that effort is the introduction of improved systems of control at airports, known as Airport Radar Service Areas. These new systems are already operating at three airports -- in Columbus, Ohio; Austin, Texas; and Baltimore, Maryland -- and have the ability to offer a significant improvement in the control of aircraft in those areas. As a requirement of this new system, pilots flying within 10 miles of an airport and under 4,000 feet will be instructed to maintain contact with the tower. Over the next few years, 133 additional systems will be put into place. These systems will provide towers with greater control over traffic and in turn give pilots the information they need to keep flying safely.

While the NAS Plan and these other efforts will help us accommodate the increased demand in the air traffic control system, we must also plan for the increase in demand for facilities created by anticipated growth in aviation. The National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems -- which we will soon be transmitting to Congress -- lists potential national airport and heliport development over the next 10 years.

As we make provisions for future needs, we are continuing our efforts on current priorities. Just last month, I was pleased when the three major providers of computerized airline reservation systems to travel agents notified me that they intend to eliminate secondary bias in their computer reservations systems. United, American and TWA -- which together account for more than 80 percent of the computer reservation system market -- are voluntarily eliminating from their integrated displays of flight information any deliberate bias favoring one airline over another. Because of the commitment of these airlines, consumers will find it easier to gain prompt, accurate, unbiased information from their travel agents to help them arrange for the most convenient schedules and lowest fares.

The airlines' decision to "un-bias" their computer reservation systems is gratifying in another respect as well. It demonstrates that government, by wisely using its "good offices," can encourage positive responses from the airline industry to perceived problems without resorting to a rule for every complaint. We hope that the computer reservation systems decision will serve as an example of what cooperation and mutual understanding can accomplish -- without more regulation.



Quite apart from safety regulations, it is clear the government has little or no business in economic issues affecting aviation. Or as Will Rogers once said, "The business of government is to keep the government out of business." In aviation, the flexibility of a deregulated environment is producing growth for the airlines and the economy. Deregulation is delivering just what was expected: more competition, better efficiency and a greater variety of service. Travelers are enjoying new choices and a wide range of fares.

Growth in air travel and rising profits in the airline industry leave no question that deregulation works. We must be particularly careful not to let problems such as congestion lure us back toward re-regulation.

The demand for air transportation last year caused record numbers of delays at the country's six busiest hub airports. The problem was largely one of over scheduling during peak hours. When the airlines sought antitrust immunity to confer on schedules, we actively supported their request. In eight days of marathon negotiations, the carriers reached an agreement on schedules that reduced delays by lowering the number of aircraft competing for the same runway at the same time. The good-faith effort by trunk carriers last September, in voluntarily shifting flights to avoid peak-hour congestion, resolved the worst of the scheduling problems at the busiest airports. Modifications in air traffic control procedures also helped. Since November, flight delays have dropped by almost half. The good news is that this was accomplished with a minimum of government intervention.

Nevertheless, last September's initiative was an extraordinary measure. The industry is still gaining experience with the realities of a deregulated market -- and certainly airport congestion is one of those realities. We expect that carriers in the future will make their individual scheduling decisions in a manner that recognizes the adverse consequences of excessive delays. In fact, the carriers have continued to operate the basic schedules that were agreed to in September. Because of these very positive actions, along with adjustments in the air traffic system, we believe new scheduling agreements will not be necessary to avoid significant delays this summer.

While many have come to depend on the services of the regional airlines, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the service of one person in particular -- your president, Duane Ekedahl -- for his excellent work on the Holton Commission. At the Department, we value Duane's counsel highly and I want to publicly thank him for his efforts on this important issue. The Commission, as you know, consisted of 15 members, including John Winant and Paul Ignatius, and chaired by former Virginia Governor Linwood Holton. Last December, the Commission reported to me its recommendations on how to shift responsibility for Washington National and Washington Dulles International Airports from federal control to an independent regional authority. The two Washington airports are the only commercial airports operated on a day-to-day basis by the federal government. We have just sent proposed legislation to Congress to initiate the transfer of the airports, thus fulfilling this Administration's commitment to turning over National and Dulles to those who have the greatest stake in the airports' future.

The legislation we submitted conforms to the plan worked out by Commission members. It represents a consensus of a majority of the Washington area communities and aviation groups that use and are affected by the airports.



The authority, to be modeled after other successful airport authorities, would have the capability to issue tax-exempt revenue bonds to finance improvements at both airports. This funding source will enable improvements to be made to facilities at National and at Dulles within the next few years -- much sooner than the budget process in the foreseeable future. We believe this transfer is a positive move -- the Congress has an unusual opportunity to give the Washington area control of its airports. I look forward to working with the Congress to enact this bill.

Nationally, America's transportation industries, together with every other sector of our economy, are energized by new freedom and new competition -- and they are satisfying human needs and aspirations. The growth we are experiencing today, in our aviation industry and throughout the country, is the result of private enterprise renewed, competition rekindled. We have gone back to doing what we do best. We have placed our faith in a free market disciplined by competition. Nowhere is this better illustrated than by the 203 regional carriers currently providing scheduled airline services to millions of Americans.

I think of a woman who knew great adversity, one whose spirit and example inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller -- and she summed up her philosophy in a single sentence. "One can never consent to creep," she wrote, "when one feels an impulse to soar."

We have an impulse in America to soar -- to achieve new heights of safety, to loosen the shackles of economic regulation, to go as far and rise as high as our national will and competitive skills will take us.

Wilbur Wright's short flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, at the turn of the century spanned only a few seconds and about 120 feet. But the Wright Brothers that morning ushered in an era of powered flight that fulfilled the dream of centuries. Today, the Space Shuttle is a wonderful example of what our technology can accomplish with long-range vision. However, visions need renewal.

American aviation has a proud record of unparalleled ingenuity in competing to serve its growing market. I know that together we can bring that same ingenuity to bear on the continuing challenges ahead. I deeply believe the results of our efforts can be as wonderful and dramatic for Americans in future years as the breakthroughs by the bold innovators of long ago have been for us.

Thank you very much.

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