



Highlights of [GAO-07-693T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, Committee on Science and Technology, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The skies over America are becoming more crowded every day. The consensus of opinion is that the current system cannot be expanded to meet projected growth. In 2003, recognizing the need for system transformation, Congress authorized the creation of the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO), housed within the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), to lead a collaborative effort of federal and nonfederal aviation stakeholders to conceptualize and plan the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen)—a fundamental redesign and modernization of the national airspace system. JPDO operates in conjunction with its partner agencies, which include FAA; the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

GAO's testimony focuses on the progress that JPDO has made in planning the NextGen initiative and some key issues and challenges that JPDO continues to face. This statement is based on GAO's November 2006 report to this subcommittee as well as ongoing work. In our November 2006 report, we recommended that JPDO take actions to institutionalize its collaboration and determine if it had the involvement of all key stakeholders. JPDO said it would consider our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-693T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gerald L. Dillingham, Ph.D., at (202) 512-2834 or dillinghamg@gao.gov.

JOINT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Progress and Key Issues in Planning the Transition to the Next Generation Air Transportation System

What GAO Found

JPDO has made progress in several areas in its planning of the NextGen initiative, but continues to face a number of challenges. JPDO's organizational structure incorporates some of the practices that we have found to be effective for federal interagency collaborations, and includes an institute that facilitates the participation of nonfederal stakeholders. JPDO has faced some organizational challenges, however. Leadership turnover at JPDO and the Institute have raised concerns about the stability of JPDO and the impact of the turnovers on its progress. Additionally, we and JPDO officials have heard concerns from stakeholders about the productivity of some integrated product teams and the pace of the planning effort. In response, JPDO officials are currently proposing several changes to JPDO's organizational structure aimed at improving the organization's effectiveness.

JPDO has also made progress toward releasing several key planning documents, including a Concept of Operations, an Enterprise Architecture, and an Integrated Work Plan, although in some cases on a revised and extended timeline. JPDO is focusing on the right types of key documents for the foundation of NextGen planning, although the current draft Concept of Operations still lacks important details. In our November 2006 report, we noted that JPDO is fundamentally a planning and coordinating body that lacks authority over the key human and technological resources of its partner agencies. Consequently, institutionalizing the collaborative process with its partner agencies will be critical to JPDO's ability to facilitate the implementation of NextGen. JPDO has identified several tasks including aligning the enterprise architectures of its partner agencies, working with OMB to establish a cross-agency mechanism for NextGen funding decisions, and working with FAA to revamp a key planning document to focus on the NextGen effort.

JPDO has made progress in developing cost estimates for NextGen, recently reporting that it estimates the total federal cost for NextGen infrastructure through 2025 will range between \$15 billion and \$22 billion. Questions remain, however, over which entities will fund and conduct some of the necessary research, development, and demonstration projects that in the past were often conducted by NASA, and which will be key to achieving certain NextGen capabilities. For example, JPDO's investment simulation capability, which relies heavily on a NASA modeling platform, may be constrained unless the JPDO or another partner agency can assume the modeling work. JPDO also faces a challenge in addressing questions concerning how human factors issues, such as the changing roles of air traffic controllers in a more automated NextGen environment, will be researched and addressed. Finally, JPDO has a continuing challenge in ensuring the involvement of all key stakeholders, including controllers and technicians. Similarly, issues have arisen over whether conflict of interest issues could chill the participation of industry stakeholders.