

Fact Sheet: National Airspace Redesign

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The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is in the midst of a multiyear effort to redesign the nation's airspace to add capacity and improve the efficiency of air travel by the airlines, general aviation and the military. The National Airspace Redesign (NAR) is using new technologies, aircraft equipment, infrastructure and procedures in this effort. NAR is simultaneously taking both a bottom up and top down approach.

Background

The U. S. airspace has remained largely unchanged for decades while every other component of aviation has progressed significantly. In the long term, it is clear that demand for air travel will continue to grow, bringing with it increasing congestion, delays and inefficiencies unless the FAA and the entire aviation industry react. NAR, a major element in the FAA's Operational Evolution Plan (OEP), is designed to counter that trend.

The **top down approach** is focused on redesign of the airspace at high altitudes (initially at 39,000 feet and above). It will exploit new navigational technologies that will allow suitably equipped aircraft to fly point-to-point as the pilots desire instead of following the current system of rigid routes from one position to another based on ground-based navigational aids. These new technologies include advanced area navigation (RNAV) and Required Navigational Performance (RNP). These will allow pilots to fly the route and altitude they desire instead of following a rigid route and altitude assigned by Air Traffic Control.

The first phase of high-altitude redesign will begin May 15, 2003 in the airspace of seven enroute centers in the northwest area of the country. It will then expand to include another seven centers in the southwest and south, followed by the remaining six centers in the northeast of the contiguous 48 states by 2006. The exact timing of expansion to the northeast depends on completion of lower-altitude redesign in the Great Lakes and New York/ New Jersey/Philadelphia areas. The pace of later expansion to altitudes below 39,000 feet will depend on the extent to which aircraft – airline, private and military – are equipped to fly such direct routes.

The **bottom up approach** is redesigning and optimizing the local airspace to increase efficiency and reduce delays for flights in and out of terminal areas. This effort is focused on the 35 airports now in the FAA's continuing Airport Capacity Benchmarks study. Released in April 2001, the Benchmark Report looked at how many aircraft could land and take off in an hour at 31 major airports both under optimum conditions and in bad weather. It also looked closely at the eight airports where three percent or more of

flights were delayed and what improvements could be expected. The FAA plans to publish an update of the Report in June 2003.

This local effort is already under way in several major metropolitan areas, including New York /New Jersey/Philadelphia, Baltimore/Washington, Boston and the Los Angeles Basin. One goal of local airspace redesign is to take maximum advantage of the additional capacity offered by new runways coming into service this decade. Major airports that will get new runways include Houston, Orlando, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Atlanta and Cincinnati.

While it is a national effort, most of NAR's resources are being applied to geographic areas where the need is greatest. These are the eight airports the Benchmark Report found were the most delayed – Boston, LaGuardia, Kennedy and Newark in the New York Area, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco – and Los Angeles.

To date, the FAA has spent \$69 million on NAR and plans to spend \$35 million annually in FY 2003 through FY2008. Total savings to the airlines and other users of the airspace are estimated to be \$117 million annually now and grow to \$364 million annually by FY2008.

For further information, please contact:

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