Charles Bolden, NASA Administrator

COMSTAC Advisory Committee Public Meeting

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Thank you, George [Zamka] for that gracious introduction. I can't think of a better place for a former astronaut to land than here at the FAA. I also want to extend my thanks to FAA Administrator, Michael Huerta, and Associate Administrator, George Nield, for the invitation to speak with you this morning and for the indispensable NASA/FAA partnership that has been strengthened under your leadership. Thanks to COMSTAC Chair, Mike Gold, and his Vice Chair, the President of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation and another former NASA astronaut, Michael Lopez-Alegria, for the important advisory role you play as FAA and NASA work together to foster a strong commercial space industry.

Last Saturday, as I watched the amazing unscheduled spacewalk by astronauts Chris Cassidy and Tom Marshburn to fix the ammonia leak on the ISS, I could not help but think back to my own days as an astronaut and the remarkable astronaut careers of both George Zamka and Michael Lopez-Alegria. George joined the astronaut corps in 1998 and logged 692 hours in space on two shuttle missions while traveling 12 million miles. During his four space shuttle missions, Mike LA logged more than 257 days in space and performed 10 spacewalks, including a record 5 in a single mission, during Expedition 14 in 2006, which he commanded. Now that Mike, George, and I are all in the orbit of the Washington beltway, I think they might agree that flying a space shuttle and making repairs in outer space is a lot easier – and a lot more fun -- than trying to figure out the nuts and bolts and navigate the twists and turns of Capitol Hill.

One of the ways we've been able to maneuver across that tricky terrain is through the President's annual budget roadmap and the priorities for NASA agreed to jointly by the Administration and the Congress.

This is the first time we have had a chance to meet since the President announced his 2014 in April, so I want to share with you some of the highlights of what's in it for NASA, especially as we continue to advance our commercial crew and cargo plans.

The President has proposed a fiscal year 2014 budget for NASA of $17.7 billion. This budget ensures the United States will remain the world's leader in space exploration and scientific discovery for years to come, while making critical advances in aerospace and aeronautics to benefit the American people.

This budget reflects today's fiscal realities and aligns NASA's full spectrum of activities to meet the President's challenge to send humans to an asteroid in 2025 and Mars in the 2030s.

It also supports the Administration's commitment that NASA remains a leader in innovation through cost-effective solutions that inspire the world.

The President's budget advances a strategic plan for the future that builds on U.S. preeminence in science and technology, improves life on Earth, and protects our home planet, while creating well-paying jobs and strengthening the American economy.

As you no doubt have heard, using game-changing technologies advanced by the Administration, NASA is developing a first-ever mission to identify, capture and relocate an asteroid.

This mission represents an unprecedented technological challenge -- raising the bar for human exploration and discovery, while helping protect our home planet and bringing us closer to a human mission to one of these mysterious objects.

Our asteroid strategy – of which this mission is just one piece – brings together the best of NASA's science, technology, and human exploration efforts to achieve the President's goals faster and at a lower cost to taxpayers than continuing with business as usual.

While all of this is going on, our American industry partners, many of whom are in this room, are developing new ways to reach space, creating jobs and enabling NASA to focus on new technologies that benefit all of our missions.

A little more than a year and a half after the end of the Space Shuttle Program, an industry partner, SpaceX, began resupplying the space station with cargo launched from the U.S, and the recent successful test launch by Orbital Sciences marks another significant milestone in NASA’s plan to rely on American companies to launch supplies and astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS), bringing this important work back to the United States where it belongs.

In addition to providing further evidence that our strategic space exploration plan is moving forward, the Orbital Sciences test launch also inaugurated Wallops Flight Facility on the Virginia Eastern Shore as America's newest spaceport capable of launching to the Space Station and opening up additional opportunities for commercial and government users.

Under this budget, the American cargo resupply program is funded to keep these operations on track.

The Administration is also committed to launching American astronauts from U.S soil within the next four years, and this budget provides the necessary resources to achieve this goal. But here is where our spacewalk up to Capitol Hill gets a little dicey.

Three years ago, the Administration put forward a public-private partnership plan, the Commercial Crew Program, to ensure that American companies would be launching our astronauts from American soil by 2015. It's a plan that supports the U.S. human spaceflight program, boosts our economy, and helps create good-paying American jobs. If NASA had received the President's requested funding for this plan, we would not have been forced to recently sign a new contract with the Russians for Soyuz transportation flights.

Because the funding for the President's plan has been significantly reduced, we now won't be able to support American launches until 2017. Even this delayed availability will be in question if Congress does not fully support the President's 2014 request for our Commercial Crew Program, forcing us once again to extend our contract with the Russians. Further delays in our Commercial Crew Program and its impact on our human spaceflight program are unacceptable.

That’s why we need the full $821 million the President has requested in next year’s budget to keep us on track to meet our 2017 deadline and bring these launches back to the United States.

Let me be clear: I am committed to launching American astronauts and their cargo from U.S. soil on spacecraft built by American companies. It’s time to end the outsourcing of this work to the Russians. It’s time to bring these jobs back home, and it’s time to allow America’s commercial space industry to take over transport to the International Space Station so that NASA can do what we do best – make it possible for our astronauts to go deeper into space than anyone has ever gone before.

But, that’s not all that’s happening with commercial crew and cargo.

Last August, we announced the selection of three companies – Boeing, SpaceX and Sierra Nevada – to complete the design of a fully integrated commercial crew transportation system that consists of the spacecraft, launch vehicle, ground operations, and mission control.

In January, we announced a contract with Bigelow Aerospace to test Bigelow's expandable space habitat technology, or BEAM, on the ISS.

All of our commercial partners continue to work diligently and innovatively toward their milestones. Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne, which is supporting The Boeing Company during the development of its CST-100 spacecraft in NASA's Commercial Crew Development Round 2, completed mission-duration hot-fire tests on a launch abort engine last March.

Blue Origin has successfully tested the aerodynamic design of its next-generation space vehicle in development, and the vehicle has completed a series of wind tunnel tests.

I want to commend the landmark agreement reached last year between NASA and the FAA to coordinate standards for commercial space travel of government and non-government astronauts to and from the ISS and low-Earth orbit. This is an essential step in bringing the business of launching Americans back to American soil while ensuring high standards of safety and reliability.

But again, the key to achieving our goal of facilitating a strong commercial space industry is adequate funding along with good old-fashioned American competition.

Our current primary destination for both commercial cargo and crew mission is the International Space Station -- the springboard to our next great leap in exploration.

The ISS is a convergence of science, technology, and human innovation that is helping us learn what it means to be a spacefaring people by demonstrating new technologies and making research breakthroughs not possible on Earth.

The President’s budget continues investments that are developing the rocket and crew vehicle that will take astronauts to deep space. It is also driving the development of space technologies such as solar electric propulsion that will power tomorrow's missions and help improve life on Earth. Our technology investments not only increase the capabilities of NASA, but other government agencies and industry as well.

This budget continues to build on our nation's record of breathtaking scientific discoveries and achievements in space, with science missions that will reach farther into our solar system, reveal unknown aspects of our universe and provide critical knowledge about our home planet.

On the heels of *Curiosity*, the most daring mission to Mars in history, the fiscal year 2014 budget includes funding for another rover mission to the Red Planet in 2020.

It continues operations of our rovers and orbiters already there, and makes possible the *MAVEN* mission's launch this coming November to study the Martian upper atmosphere followed by the launch of the *InSight* lander in 2016.

The budget will sustain NASA's vital role in helping us understand Earth's systems and climate and the dynamics between our planet and the sun. These efforts will provide critical knowledge about our home planet and potential threats.

We will continue our steady progress toward our next Great Observatory as we develop and conduct critical tests on the James Webb Space Telescope. Its planned launch in 2018 will again revolutionize our understanding of the universe.

While reaching for new heights in space, we're creating new jobs right here on Earth – especially for the next generation of American scientists and engineers.

With the President’s proposed budget, we are supporting cutting-edge aeronautics and space technology innovations and research and development that will help fuel the nation's economy for years to come.

This budget supports the Administration's plan to consolidate and improve the many STEM education programs across the federal government, maintaining NASA's unique ability to inspire the next generation of scientists, technologists, engineers, and astronauts.

We've had to make tough choices with this budget, but NASA is using its resources strategically for a unified, cohesive exploration program that raises the bar of what humans can achieve and keeps us on track to turn low-Earth orbit transportation of both cargo and crew over to commercial companies. This will free NASA to take the next big leap into deep space and put the first footprints on Mars.

I firmly believe we're on the threshold of remarkable new human and robotic exploration and discoveries and I'm genuinely excited to be a member of the NASA time at this historic time in our nations history. I hope all of you in this room share my excitement and that you will commit yourselves to push passage of the President's budget request. The continued leadership of our nation in space exploration is in the balance.

Thank you! I'll gladly take any questions you may have.