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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-25](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, Congress created the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) to plan for and coordinate, with federal and nonfederal stakeholders, a transformation from the current air traffic control system to the “next generation air transportation system” (NGATS) by 2025. Housed within the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), JPDO has seven partner agencies: the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security; FAA; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. FAA will have primary responsibility for implementing NGATS. This report addresses (1) the status of JPDO’s efforts to plan for NGATS, (2) the key challenges facing JPDO, and (3) the key challenges facing FAA as it implements the transformation. To address these issues, GAO reviewed relevant documents, interviewed agency officials and stakeholders, and conducted an expert panel.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that JPDO institutionalize its practices for interagency collaboration and assess stakeholder involvement, and that FAA assess its needs for technical expertise. JPDO and FAA commented that they plan to consider GAO’s recommendations. NASA highlighted the impact of its refocused aeronautics research. GAO incorporated the other agencies’ technical comments as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-25.

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.

NEXT GENERATION AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Progress and Challenges Associated with the Transformation of the National Airspace System

What GAO Found

JPDO has developed a framework for planning and coordinating with its partner agencies and nonfederal stakeholders that is consistent with its authorizing legislation and with several practices that GAO’s previous work has shown can facilitate federal interagency collaboration. JPDO’s partner agencies have agreed on a vision for NGATS and on eight strategies that broadly address the goals and objectives of NGATS. JPDO has been developing an enterprise architecture (or blueprint) for NGATS and plans to use the enterprise architecture and stakeholder input from investment analysis workshops to develop a realistic cost estimate for NGATS.

JPDO faces challenges in institutionalizing its collaborative effort, addressing planning and expertise gaps, establishing credibility with stakeholders, and harmonizing its work with other countries’ efforts to modernize their own air traffic management systems. To date, JPDO has not established some practices significant to institutionalizing its collaborative process, such as formalizing roles and responsibilities. Such practices are important because JPDO is fundamentally a planning and coordinating body that lacks authority over the key human and financial resources needed to continue developing plans and system requirements for NGATS.

FAA, as the key implementer of the transition to NGATS, faces challenges both in institutionalizing the management reforms that it has made in recent years that have contributed to its ability to meet its goals for air traffic control system acquisitions and in obtaining the financial and technical resources needed to implement NGATS. FAA also faces challenges in finding ways to reduce costs or realize savings to help fund the costs of transitioning to NGATS while continuing to operate and maintain the current system. Finally, FAA faces challenges in obtaining the technical and contract management expertise needed to define, implement, and integrate the numerous complex programs and systems inherent in the transition to NGATS.

Seven Partner Agencies Form the Joint Planning and Development Office



Source: GAO.