Commercial aircraft

4. Partners of the FAA

The aviation community contributes to the NAS through government/industry forums, Architecture working groups, and many other arenas. The FAA and industry collaborate on R&D activities. The FAA works with partners in the aviation community to improve the NAS Architecture. This section identifies a few of the many partners working to improve the NAS.

RTCA, Inc.

RTCA, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit organization that addresses requirements and technical concepts for aviation. RTCA products include recommended standards and guidance documents that focus on the application of electronics technology to implement new or modified concepts and to satisfy related requirements.

RTCA functions as a Federal advisory organization. Its committees include the Free Flight Select Committee, the Free Flight Steering Committee, and the Program Management Committee, as well as numerous special committees.

Special committees are formed when the FAA requests that RTCA recommend Minimum Operational Performance Standards or appropriate technical guidance documents.

RTCA serves as the FAA-industry liaison, providing the FAA with vital input from industry to ensure both FAA and industry understanding of each others' direction. RTCA accepted the implementation step structure and content for the air traffic services group of the NAS Architecture, representing a general industry acceptance of the NAS Architecture approach.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

The ICAO, a treaty organization of the United Nations, develops the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport. It includes representation from the countries in which the U.S. has significant air commerce, including our neighbors to the north and south, Canada and Mexico.

The ICAO serves many functions and shares many goals with the FAA in the international forum. The organization assists in developing and planning international air navigation. The ICAO goals include: ensuring safety in international civil aviation; encouraging the design of aircraft, airports, and navigational facilities; protecting the rights of ICAO member States; and meeting the needs of all peoples of the world for safe, regular, efficient, and economical air transport. The ICAO additionally assigns control of international airspace and has assigned 80 percent of the world's controlled Oceanic airspace to the U.S.

Research, Engineering, & Development Advisory Committee (R,E&D)

The FAA R,E&D Advisory Committee, established in 1989, advises the FAA Administrator on R&D issues and coordinates FAA R,E&D activities with industry and other government agencies. The Committee considers aviation research needs in air traffic management (ATM), airport technology, aircraft safety, aviation security, human factors, environment, and energy.

Transportation Research Board (TRB)

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) is a unit of the National Research Council, a private, not-for-profit institution that is the principal operating agency of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. The TRB promotes innovation and progress in transportation by stimulating and conducting research, facilitating dissemination of information, and encouraging implementation of research results.

TRB tasks include: performing research and reviews of FAA concepts; identifying critical issues in transportation; assisting in identifying issues and resolving problems in safety, security, and transportation recovery; and conducting annual meetings that identify issues and concepts and help disseminate information.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the FAA promote safety in aviation within their respective statutory purviews. When accidents occur, the FAA participates in the NTSB investigation to learn what accident prevention actions should be implemented and to provide technical support to the NTSB. The NTSB determines the probable cause of accidents and makes recommendations to reduce recurrences. The NTSB also assists in National Safety Summits and provides the FAA with safety recommendations.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

The FAA and NASA have a long history of cooperation on integrated ATM systems to enhance the capacity, efficiency, safety, and security of the NAS. Several Memoranda of Agreement allow NASA to be a full partner with the FAA in research projects. The NASA/FAA Executive Committee shares budget information, discusses metrics and goals, and explores program areas linking NASA and the FAA to ensure that R&D activities meet sponsor expectations. The FAA and NASA also cooperate on concept and decision support tool validation.

Department of Defense (DoD)

The nation's military is an important and valued user of the NAS and provides 20 percent of air traffic services. Numerous agreements exist to guide joint efforts that ensure safety and modernize the NAS. The Department of Defense (DoD) Policy Board on Federal Aviation coordinates policy changes and military representatives assigned to the FAA coordinate day-to-day activities. Also, the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command developed and manages GPS, a critical component of future civil aviation navigation systems.

Others

There are numerous other groups and organizations that work with the FAA to achieve a safer, more efficient NAS. The FAA collaborates with civil aviation authorities around the world, sharing information relevant to current and future worldwide initiatives and with the National Weather Service (NWS) and DoD for the exchange of crucial weather information. Additionally, pilot associations and other ATC associations provide valuable input through participation in working groups and other forums. Finally, the Office of Space Commercialization works with the FAA and the International Trade Administration on space policy and distributes information concerning the global commercial space transportation market.

Commercial aircraft in flight