

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



August 24, 2011

Vice Admiral Joseph W. Dyer, USN (Ret.)
Chair
Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC 20546

Dear ~~Admiral~~ ^{Joe} Dyer:

Enclosed is NASA's response to a recommendation from the 2011 Second Quarterly Meeting of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP). Please do not hesitate to contact me if the ASAP would like further background on the information provided in the enclosure.

I look forward to receiving continued advice from the ASAP that results from your important fact-finding and quarterly meetings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CF Bolden, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator

Enclosure
2011-02-01 Commercial Crew Program

ASAP Tracking Number 2011-02-1
Commercial Crew Program

Finding

After the final Space Shuttle flight in July 2011, the Nation will not have the ability to unilaterally launch a U.S. astronaut into space for the first time since 1981. The Panel considers this to be a problem of major importance to the Nation. Therefore, recovering this capability should be accomplished as quickly as possible. The current plan to fill this gap is the Commercial Crew Program (CCP).

ASAP notes that:

- There has been good progress in developing a coherent method to manage this effort.
- The maturity level is still behind what the schedule requires.
- The budget is well below what is required to support at least two partners.
- Without competition there is even greater budget pressure.
- Budget and schedule pressure can impact program success and safety.

Recommendation

NASA needs to apply appropriate resources to the CCP to ensure that it meets or beats the 2016 goal while maintaining NASA's high standards for quality and safety. To this end, NASA should seek additional resources either within the existing budget or through additional appropriations.

Rationale

Apparent impending budget and schedule pressure can deleteriously impact cost and ultimate program feasibility, success, and most importantly, safety.

NASA Response

NASA concurs that achieving commercial crew transportation services as soon as possible, and no later than 2016, is a high national priority. NASA also concurs with ASAP's recommendation to provide sufficient resources to enable this CCP goal while maintaining established safety and system reliability standards.

NASA considers the current CCP budget, as defined in the President's budget recommendation for 2012, to be high risk, based on the wide range of initial cost estimates. However, the out-year portion of the President's FY 2010 Budget Request (FY 2013-2016) was "notional." NASA is therefore engaging independent studies to refine the cost estimates, including studying the effects of competition. Furthermore, NASA is preparing to initiate acquisition processes for the next phases of development, and the resulting proposals from industry will provide much more refined cost estimates. As this data becomes available, the CCP will work with the Mission Directorate, Agency, Administration, and Congress through subsequent budget formulation processes to ensure that adequate resources are budgeted to enable CCP to minimize the gap in U.S. human spaceflight capability without compromising safety. NASA will continue to update external stakeholders, including the ASAP, on the budget and cost estimates as they mature.