

## **Press Release – FAA Creates Center of Excellence for Commercial Space Transportation**

### **For Immediate Release**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has selected New Mexico State University (NMSU), Las Cruces, NM, to lead a new Air Transportation Center of Excellence for Commercial Space Transportation. The center is a partnership of academia, industry, and government, developed for the purpose of creating a world-class consortium that will address current and future challenges for commercial space transportation.

“The Obama Administration is committed to making sure the United States remains the world leader in space development and exploration,” said Secretary LaHood. “This new center underscores that commitment, and will ensure that the commercial space community can meet our current and future space transportation needs.”

The Obama Administration recently released its new National Space Policy, which recognizes opportunities and advancements in commercial space transportation and lays out specific ways to use commercial capabilities.

“Commercial space flight is ready to play a greater role in the nation’s space program,” said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. “Universities working with industry partners will fuel the research necessary to help keep us in the forefront of both technology and safety in space.”

Called the Center of Excellence for Commercial Space Transportation, the new center is expected to begin operations this month. The research and development efforts will include four major research areas: space launch operations and traffic management; launch vehicle systems, payloads, technologies, and operations; commercial human space flight; and space commerce (including space law, space insurance, space policy and space regulation). The FAA will enter into 50-50 cost-sharing cooperative agreements to establish the partnerships, with plans to invest at least \$1 million per year for the initial five years of the center’s operations.

New Mexico State University in Las Cruces will lead a team of colleges and universities throughout the country. These include: Florida Institute of Technology, Florida State University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Stanford University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Florida, University of Central Florida, and University of Texas Medical Branch.

Congress authorized Air Transportation Centers of Excellence under the Federal Aviation Administration Research, Engineering and Development Authorization Act of 1990. This legislation enables the FAA to work with universities and their industry partners to conduct research in environment and aviation safety, and other activities to assure a safe and efficient air transportation system. With the establishment of this center, research will extend to cutting-edge technologies and infrastructure for private human spaceflight and orbital debris mitigation.

The United States' space program has three sectors — civil, military and commercial. The FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation is responsible for licensing, regulating and promoting the commercial sector space industry. Since the office was created in 1984, the FAA has issued licenses for more than 200 launches, has licensed the operation of eight FAA-approved launch sites known as spaceports, and has helped ensure that no loss of life or serious injury has been associated with these efforts. For more information on FAA's commercial space transportation activities, a fact sheet is available at: [http://www.faa.gov/news/fact\\_sheets/news\\_story.cfm?newsId=11559](http://www.faa.gov/news/fact_sheets/news_story.cfm?newsId=11559)

The FAA has established eight other centers of excellence, focusing on air cabin environment, noise and emissions mitigation, airport pavement technology, operations research, advanced materials, aircraft structures, airworthiness assurance, and general aviation. For more information about the FAA Centers of Excellence program, visit the web page at <http://www.faa.gov/go/coe>.