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Remarks as prepared for delivery

Thanks, Rich, for the opportunity to join you on the podium today to make a few remarks and introduce Administrator Randy Babbitt.

I don't want to take a lot of time as we're all interested in hearing what Randy has to say, but I did want to make a couple of points.

First, congratulations to Rich and your team on two fronts. I don't know how many in the audience are aware, but tomorrow, Rich is going to accept the prestigious Williams Trophy on behalf of CAAFI. The Williams Trophy is awarded by the Washington Airports Task Force to recognize those whose "Leadership, Vision and Dedication in the Application of Aviation or Space Enriched the Quality of Life on Earth."

That's quite an ambitious criterion. However, I can tell you, having been involved with CAAFI since its inception, Rich and his team are highly deserving of the award.

Second, this conference – what an outstanding agenda. As we know, the global civil aviation industry will not be able to reach its goal of cutting CO2 emissions in half by 2050 without economically viable and commercially available sustainable biofuels. This conference is bringing together some of the key players who are going to make this happen.

And what I think is exciting about where we are today, is that – like any successful entrepreneurial endeavor – the search for sustainable alternative aviation fuels started small.

I remember well, back when I was at FAA, the pitch Carl Burluson gave for the creation of CAAFI. Being a long-time believer and proponent of public private partnerships, I didn't need a "hard sell" to convince me that the idea had great promise.

And the price tag – if memory serves, it was about \$600,000 – seemed a bargain at the time. Of course, in today's budget environment, that might not be the case, but back then, it was a "no brainer" as they say. And what a shrewd investment it turned out to be. I'd like to take full credit, but the truth is, success has many parents and the original CAAFI team – many of whom are here today – proves the axiom.

What was equally exciting at the time was that the Air Force, under the leadership of Secretary Mike Wynn, saw the same potential of alternative fuels – first for security, and later, for environmental reasons. Together, we laid out a vision for the future at the Paris Air Show in 2007, committing to fly, in a very short amount of time, with blended fuels.

It's really quite amazing how far we've come since then. Not only are alternative fuels approved, but they are in use.

Last month Continental Airlines sent the first U.S. revenue commercial flight on a Boeing 737-800 from Houston to Chicago fueled by an algae-based biojet fuel blend.

Two days later, Alaska Airlines sent the first two of 75 scheduled flights from Seattle and Portland to Washington D.C. fueled by a jet fuel blend made of recycled cooking oil. Just a couple of many success stories and huge steps forward.

We can't stop now. To make commercially viable sustainable biofuels a reality will require continued commitments of time and capital from government and industry. In the United States we need an "intervention" to break our addiction to fossil fuels – especially foreign fossil fuels!

Despite the progress we've seen, a lot of important work still needs to happen in order to allow civil aviation to reach its potential in terms of its many contributions to our society, economy and commerce. It's quite impressive to see how the industry is pulling together to make this happen. That's a tribute to everyone in this room.

CAAFI is the case study of how a public private partnership should work. We ought to look closely at how we might apply its successful principles to the acceleration of NextGen implementation.

Thanks for the opportunity to talk to you and share with you one of the real success stories of our industry. Now it's my pleasure to introduce your next speaker, FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt and hear his thoughts on the topic.

Randy became the 16th administrator in June 2009. As a commercial pilot with 25 years under his belt for Eastern Airlines, Randy understands the impact of the cost of jet fuel on an airline's bottom line and the critical importance of realizing the potential of commercialization of biofuels. And of course, the FAA as a member of CAAFI understands as well as anyone the importance of keeping the needle moving forward on this issue.

Let's all welcome Randy.