

0:00 *Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We have a distinct pleasure and honor this evening to be joined by a very distinguished guest. Mister FAA has joined us tonight to discuss the future of Aviation: NextGen. Welcome, Mister FAA.*

0:12 **Good evening. I'm very excited about NextGen.**

0:20 *So I have heard. Mister FAA, can you first tell us what NextGen is, and what it is intended to accomplish?*

0:26 **Certainly. NextGen is the future of aviation. It will fix everything.**

0:34 *Well, that is certainly quite a bit to live up to. Maybe you could be just a touch more specific with us about its Future Part and the goals that it is intended to fix.*

0:44 **Well, the future is everything after today. In government terms, the future means a time long after I retire.**

0:51 *Do you have any specific dates for NextGen?*

0:53 **Of course. Users will have to equip starting in 2015 and ITT, our contractor, has lots of specific dates.**

1:02 *I see. Are there any deadlines for the agency, or did you just imposed deadlines on everyone else?*

1:05 **Of course we have lots of deadlines, but seeing as we are the government they are pretty much meaningless. If we aren't ready at a deadline, we will just move it. If we get close, we'll have a huge media event and tell everyone about how well we are doing with our schedule.**

1:23 *What if users aren't ready by your deadline?*

1:25 **Technically speaking, I'd say that they are hosed; dorked up; bugged. In a word, they are grounded.**

1:33 *That sounds somewhat one-sided, don't you think?*

1:37 **Let me see. (pause) Nope. Sounds right to me.**

1:41 *I see. Let's get back to what NextGen is intended to do. Can you elaborate on what NextGen is, exactly?*

1:48 **I'd love to. NextGen is a group of programs all designed to eliminate delays, reduce voice, protect the environment, increase capacity, and make everyone smile.**

2:01 *Wow. That must be some strong koolaid they serve you. Can you list a few of the programs?*

2:06 **First is RNP. We have already started rolling out RNP across the country. We have RNP procedures at many airports such as Palm Springs, San Francisco, Peachtree and Boise, to name a few.**

2:20 *Excuse me for interrupting, but let's talk about RNP for just a moment.*

2:24 **Gladly.**

2:25 *You said you have a procedure at Palm Springs?*

2:27 **Three of them, in fact.**

2:29 *How long have they been available?*

2:32 **Let me think. Almost two years, if I recall.**

2:35 *What runways are served by these procedures?*

2:37 **13 right, 13 left, and 31 left.**

2:41 *Okay. For runway 13 right, how many planes have used this approach in the last year?*

2:46 **None.**

2:47 *What about 13 left?*

2:49 **Zero. A big doughnut.**

2:52 *Oh. Okay. What about 31 left?*

2:54 **Nada. Zip. Zilch. Goose-egg there.**

2:57 *That's not very impressive.*

2:59 **'Build it and they will come'. That's my motto.**

3:02 *But you did build it and no one has come in the past year. Why is that?*

3:06 **Well, the only RNP-qualified users at Palm Springs have their own RNP procedures. They all use those and not ours.**

3:13 *Why is that?*

3:14 **There's don't suck as much as ours do. And, if you have ever flown ours in the summer, you would understand exactly how bad they really do suck.**

3:22 *You mention the qualified users. Why isn't everyone qualified?*

3:26 **Well, there are two parts to the answer to your question. First, we as the regulator decided that because of the RF legs, these procedures needed to have special training for the crews and special qualifications for the aircraft.**

3:38 *What is so special about an RF leg?*

3:41 **It is curved and makes the planes turn. This is some pretty Buck Rogers, high-tech stuff here. Not just anyone in just any airplane can do that.**

3:49 *Do you mean to tell me that regular pilots and planes aren't allowed to turn?*

3:53 **This is different. They could be in the clouds.**

3:56 *Before RNP, are you saying planes weren't allowed to turn in the clouds?*

4:00 **No, they do it all the time. But this is different.**

4:04 *Oh, pray tell. How is this different?*

4:06 **We're using satellites now?**

4:08 *How does that make flying a curved arc different?*

4:11 **It just does. This is some scary stuff here. Satellites, planes turning, clouds, GPS, dogs and cats sleeping together. Truly scary stuff. Your everyday pilot just isn't ready for this.**

4:24 *I see.*

4:25 **I knew you would understand.**

4:27 *Well, actually I don't. I just said that to move the conversation along. I haven't heard one valid reason why you have made it so difficult for someone to fly this approach. I mean, really, you said this is the future and that you want everyone to get on board, but then you go and throw up roadblocks. Kinda defeats the original intent, don't you think?*

4:47 **Look here, we are the government and we know what is best.**

4:51 *What other roadblocks - I mean, reasons ... aren't more users qualified to fly RNP approaches?*

4:56 **Well, qualification is quite expensive.**

4:59 *Now, that I understand. The government doesn't have a whole lot of extra money just laying around to get users qualified. I'm sure that...*

5:06 **You missed the point it isn't expensive for us. It is expensive for the operator. Doesn't affect our budget at all.**

5:13 *Hold the phone. You mean you are making the operators pay to help you move forward with RNP?*

5:18 **Of course. You don't expect us to pay out for anything, do you?**

5:23 *So, shouldn't your motto be, 'build it and they will spend'?*

5:25 **I like that. Has a nice ring to it. Sounds better than my first choice.**

5:30 *What was your first choice?*

5:32 **'Show me the money'.**

5:33 *Wow. I'm speechless. Okay, let's take a break before I pick up this laptop and try and beat some common sense into you. Ladies and gentlemen we'll be right back after a short break.*

5:45 (applause)

6:03 *Okay, we're back with Mister FAA for more. What can you tell us about the next part of NextGen, ADS-B?*

6:10 **I'm glad you asked. ADS-B will be our new surveillance tool.**

6:14 *So, you will shut down the radar units when ADS-B comes along? I'm sure that will be a huge cost savings for you.*

6:20 **Well, not really. For security reasons we have to keep many of them operational. We're just not going to use them for the law-abiding air traffic.**

6:28 *Why aren't you going to use the radars?*

6:30 **ADS-B is far more accurate. At a minimum, it is over six times more accurate than radar.**

6:37 *Wow. That's impressive. I can see where this would lead to reduced plane to plane separation standards.*

6:42 **Oh, heavens no. We are working like crazy to get just three miles separation out of it.**

6:48 *If it is more accurate, shouldn't that be almost assumed?*

6:51 **Goodness, gracious. We have to do studies, and write papers, and do some simulations, and travel, and have meetings, and write more papers, and hold more meetings, and travel, and create briefings, and then there is SMS, and then more meetings, and travel, and briefings, and ...**

7:08 *Nevermind. Forget I asked. What about a two-and-a-half mile separation on final between successive arrivals, that you have at some of the busy airports? How will you ever get that certified? And what about diverging course separation?*

7:20 **Well, we're going to have to have a meeting to tell MITRE to do a study, and then have them write a paper, and then have a meeting where they deliver the paper, and then have a meeting to discuss**

what the paper says, and then do a study about the paper, and then have a meeting about the study about the paper, and then have a briefing about the meeting that discussed the study about the paper. By then, I'll be in a new office and won't care about this anymore.

7:44 *So, if the aircraft are going to be the same distance apart, and the airspace isn't getting any larger, how is this going to reduce delays and improve access and capacity?*

7:52 **It will do it because it is NextGen, now with more improved awesomeness.**

8:01 *Wow. The program seems a whole lot like Halle Berry to me.*

8:05 **How so?**

8:06 *Looks good on the outside, completely empty on the inside.*

8:09 **I don't get it.**

8:11 *I didn't think you would. Equipping all those aircraft with new ADS-B equipment must be costing the government a fortune. What kind of tax hike is going to be needed to pay for this?*

8:21 **Ah, hah! Caught you there. We are making the users pay up for this too. And, they have to get RNAV and pay up for that, too.**

8:29 *So, let me see if I have a straight. You are funding the majority of the future of aviation on the backs and wallets of your users?*

8:35 **Welcome to NextGen - crisp and clean and no caffeine. Never had it, never will. Truly genius, isn't it?**

8:46 *That costs a total billions of dollars users will have to spend.*

8:50 **Yes, you got that right. They spend it, we don't.**

8:54 *What on earth are you doing with all the passenger fee taxes and fuel taxes and corporate taxes and surcharges and all the other fees and taxes you collect?*

9:02 **We established a whole new office to manage NextGen. Lots of high-level vice-presidents and directors and managers and staff and assistants and admin officers and travel and papers and studies and meetings and briefings. It's truly glorious.**

9:21 *Well, at least you will have surveillance coverage all the way to the ground. I know I can receive GPS signals in my car, no matter where I am so you should have seamless ADS-B coverage from coast to coast?*

9:32 **Well, let me see. How can I put this? No.**

9:37 *No!? I can't believe I'm going to ask this: why the heck not?*

9:42 **We only required ITT to provide coverage where we already have radar.**

9:46 *So, you'll miss the chance to improve the system then. Why?*

9:50 **We didn't want to pay out for anything new or improved. You know, our budget is very tight.**

9:55 *Correct me if I am wrong, but doesn't the Defense Department pay for the GPS satellite operation?*

10:01 **That would be a big 10-4, good buddy. They certainly do.**

10:04 *And the users are paying for the GPS receivers that calculate their position?*

10:08 **Yes, indeedio.**

10:10 *And the users are paying for the FMS systems that tell you their position?*

10:14 **Absolutely correcto mundo.**

10:16 *And, who's paying for the ground based augmentation system at Newark?*

10:19 **The airport authority is.**

10:21 *And, who's paying for the aircraft receivers for that system? No, wait, let me guess: the users?*

10:28 **Absolutamento!**

10:29 *And in the balance you are (?)?*

10:33 **Now you're cooking with gas**

10:36 *And what little you are paying for doesn't provide an improvement in coverage?*

10:39 **You're catching on.**

10:41 *So, in the end state, everyone else pays for everything and you pay for virtually nothing?*

10:46 **Yes indeedio. You have just described the financial genius behind the whole program.**

10:51 *Well, the users must be getting some benefit, aren't they?*

10:54 **Oh, they most certainly are.**

10:56 *And, I'm probably going to hate myself for asking this question: exactly what benefit will the users see in NextGen?*

11:02 **Reduced delays and increased access.**

11:05 *Well, that sounds good. What is the exact target delay reduction number that you have promised?*

11:10 **Promised? Oh, no. We don't make any promises.**

11:15 *Surely, you have a commitment of some percentage?*

11:17 **Nope. We have no promise of any measurable reduction in delays. And, don't call me Shirley.**

11:23 *What about access? What did you promise here?*

11:26 **Access? We advertise greater access.**

11:29 *How much?*

11:30 **We didn't say. This way you can't call us out when we don't meet the target. Pretty clever how...**

11:37 *...a reduction in your expenses and a shift of additional financial burden onto the user sounds a whole lot like the user fee argument that you lost...*

11:43 **Hey, now. Don't ever let anyone hear you link the concept of user fees to this program. Best if we just forget about that part for a year or so. We might want to bring it back at some point.**

11:55 *But, the users are the ones paying (?) for new gear, to make your program work. That's billions of dollars of cost to an industry that has had nothing but rocky cycle after rocky cycle since deregulation.*

12:05 **Whatever. Doesn't affect my retirement.**

12:09 *And, for that expense, the users aren't guaranteed anything in return?*

12:12 **No. Not a single thing promised.**

- 12:15 *So, we have a system that will shift the financial burden to the users, and for that expense they get nothing promised in return? Wow, what a (?).*
- 12:23 **I'm glad to see that you now fully understand the simplicity and sheer beauty of NextGen, new and improved with a bleach alternative.**
- 12:33 *And, you get to report back to Congress that you have modernized the air traffic system without doing anything to benefit anyone, except your fiscal bottom line, then? Is that what I'm understanding*
- 12:42 **Of course. Don't you see the sheer beauty of it all? Doesn't it just astound you?**
- 12:48 *I'm totally disgusted and borderline suicidal now. I can't handle another minute with you. I am leaving. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, goodnight.*
- 12:58 (applause)