

Statement
Honorable John L. Mica
Hearing on NTSB Reauthorization
March 8, 2006

Today we will receive testimony on the National Transportation Safety Board reauthorization proposal. The Board's current authorization expires on September 30, 2006.

The NTSB is a small but important part of the Federal Government. With an annual budget of \$76 million, and a staff of nearly 400 people, the NTSB makes critical contributions to our nation's safety each year.

In the United States, the three year average commercial aviation accident rate is .017 accidents per 100,000 departures – which means that the accident rate is the equivalent of one fatal accident for every 15 million passenger-carrying flights – an amazing record by any standard.

I believe this unprecedented aviation safety record is, in part, due to the outstanding work over the years by hundreds of NTSB professionals, as well as the Federal Aviation Administration and the aviation industry.

But even with this outstanding safety record in commercial air transportation, we must continue to work towards making the system even safer, especially as demand and congestion increase.

Since its creation in 1967, the NTSB has investigated more than 124,000 aviation accidents, and at least 10,000 accidents in other transportation modes. As a result of these investigations, the Board has issued almost 12,000 safety recommendations, and over 82 percent of those have been adopted.

The NTSB also serves as the “court of appeals” for any airman, mechanic or mariner whenever certificate action is taken by the FAA Administrator or the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant.

I would also like to point out that last year marked the Board's 15th anniversary of its “Most Wanted” list of transportation safety improvements. I believe this is a tool that has served the public well. In fact, over the past 15 years, 85% of the more than 260 recommendations that have been placed on the list have been accepted and implemented.

The Board's three-year reauthorization request includes additional funding, additional staff, and statutory changes.

The budget request of \$79.6 million is \$2.8 million above the fiscal year 2006 level. This increase is related to pay raises, benefit cost increases, inflation, and a

proposal to merge the NTSB's \$2 million Emergency Fund into its regular salaries and expenses accounts.

The FY08 and FY09 authorization levels requested by the NTSB are based on 475 full time equivalents.

I understand the Board has determined, through a human capital forecast conducted earlier this year, that 475 is the minimum number of full-time employees needed to effectively and efficiently meet the mission and support efforts that are expected of the Board.

Finally, the NTSB has requested three statutory changes. These requests pertain to the Board's contracting authority, its authorization and use of appropriations, and payment for the services of the DOT Inspector General.

We look forward to hearing from the Acting Chairman, Mr. Mark Rosenker, on these issues as well as an update on the NTSB Academy, and other relevant matters important to the Subcommittee.