National Space Society

NSS POSITION PAPER
U.S. Space Transportation Policy

Safe, reliable, and low cost space transportation is vital to all aspects of the exploration, development, and eventual settlement of space. In light of the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia, the United States will be reassessing its space transportation policies, and the National Space Society recommends the following key tenets as a foundation of that policy:

- To ensure the investment in the International Space Station (ISS) is not jeopardized, the U.S. should arrange for additional Soyuz and Progress flights to provide critical services for the International Space Station until the Shuttle fleet returns to service.
- Congress should provide additional resources to NASA to ensure the existing Space Shuttle fleet is returned to service as quickly as is safely possible, and provide funds for infrastructure and vehicle upgrades to improve safety and reliability during the remaining assembly of ISS.
- The U.S. should separate crewed space flight requirements from large cargo requirements for development of future launch vehicles.
- NASA should accelerate development of the Orbital Space Plane in order to increase the crew complement of the ISS to 7 people as soon as possible.
- NASA should provide additional funding and a renewed emphasis on next generation space transportation technologies to foster development of low cost access to space. The next generation program should include X-vehicle test beds to strengthen the experience base of industry and NASA in the development, integration and flight of space vehicles.
- U.S. space transportation policy should provide reliable markets and engage the private sector to the maximum extent possible.
- The U.S. should clarify that the long-term goal of our nation's space exploration and development efforts is the human settlement of space. Consistent with that goal, NASA should place a priority on the development of robust core space transportation systems that enable a broad mix of missions, including a return to the moon to fully explore and utilizes its resources and exploratory missions to Mars and nearby asteroids.
- NASA should invest in long range technologies that could reduce the mass to orbit required to support crewed space flight. Such technologies include electric propulsion, electro-dynamic tethers, use of in-situ resources, and closed loop life support systems.

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