Trump unveils plan to privatize USA air traffic control system

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President Donald Trump is making the case for privatizing the nation's air traffic control system.

During a ceremony at the White House, President Trump said, "Our air traffic control system is stuck, painfully, in the past".

White House officials say the new entity will be funded entirely by user fees and overseen by representatives from airlines, unions, general aviation and airports among others. "It's time to join the future and make flights quicker, safer, more reliable". That would save time for passengers, and reduce costs and fuel consumption for airlines, which in turn could lower the price of oil.

The FAA oversees more than 50,000 flights in the US per day. Chris Edwards, an editor at the Cato Institute, told Forbes, "Nav Canada runs one of the safest systems in the world, and it has won three International Air Transport Association (IATA) Eagle Awards as the world's best ATC provider".

The announcement Monday is part of a renewed White House focus on infrastructure.

"President Trump's campaign promises on infrastructure are crumbling faster than our roads and bridges", Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor. However, fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill were wary about a plan that would add billions to the deficit or increase taxes.

On Thursday, a bipartisan group of mayors and governors will convene at the White House to talk about infrastructure, although Miami-Dade mayor Carlos Gimenez and Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado will not be attending.

Executives from United Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines, American Airlines and Southwest Airlines, which are all represented by Airlines for America, attended the Trump speech.

Nelson previously has said that one of the reasons for his opposition to the privatization idea is that it would undermine the close relationship that the FAA has with the military on national defense issues. Data Comm is operational at 55 air traffic control towers around the country, supplementing voice communication between controllers and pilots with digital text-based messages created to make for safer, more efficient operations, as it helps aircraft take off and

reach their destinations on time. And he agrees with the president in that fees will be more efficient than the patchwork of taxes that now support the aviation system.

Flight delays are costing the U.S. economy approximately $25 billion a year, the president said, and the previous administration's attempts to upgrade the system cost $7 billion while yielding no results. A privatization bill proposed by House Transportation chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa., didn't even make it to the House floor last Congress.

Trump's plan would create a private, non-profit corporation to manage air traffic control operations nationwide with the Federal Aviation Administration continuing to provide oversight of the system.

Privatization of air traffic control is an idea long supported by most of the commercial airlines. European systems use digital communications systems, and private companies are developing new satellite systems in the hopes that the FAA will start using them.

Union officials have complained that the FAA has been unable to resolve chronic controller understaffing at some of the nation's busiest facilities and pointed to the modernization effort's slow progress.

Gribbin said the move had already been done in more than 50 countries and would allow the air traffic control system to more quickly update its technology while the FAA still maintains a safety and accountability role over the new nonprofit. It would transfer about 15,000 controllers and thousands of other managers and technical workers to a new government-sanctioned corporation, according to a plan Trump sent to Congress.