



Welcome from the Chairman

February 23, 2026

Advanced Air Mobility & NextGen Initiatives

Airline Dispatchers Federation

Fellow ADF Members,

Aviation is not simply evolving — it is being redefined.

Advanced Air Mobility is introducing new aircraft, new propulsion systems, and new operating models. At the same time, NextGen modernization is transforming the architecture of our airspace through data integration, automation, trajectory-based operations, and increasingly sophisticated decision-support systems.

These forces will not reshape aviation gradually. They will reshape it decisively.

And in that future, one question must be answered clearly:

What is the role of the Aircraft Dispatcher?

I believe the answer is not survival. It is leadership.

I have been engaged in Advanced Air Mobility since its earliest public inflection point — when Uber Elevate released its seminal 2016 white paper and ignited serious industry dialogue around urban air mobility. Since that moment, I have kept my finger on the pulse of AAM's evolution — from concept to certification pathways to operational integration discussions.

What has remained clear throughout is this:

As aircraft, airspace, and automation evolve, operational control must evolve with them.

Dispatchers sit at the intersection of safety, regulation, operational authority, weather analysis, risk management, and real-time strategic decision-making. That is not a narrow function. It is systems thinking under pressure.

As automation expands and artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in aviation systems, there will inevitably be conversations about replacing human decision-makers with algorithms.

We should not fear that conversation.

But we must lead it.

AI can process data.

AI can generate options.

AI can optimize models.

What it cannot replicate is accountable operational judgment, regulatory responsibility, ethical decision-making, and the human coordination that defines safe airline operations.

The future airspace will be more automated.

But it will also be more complex.

And complexity demands professional oversight — not less of it.

Our Mandate

This initiative exists to ensure that Aircraft Dispatchers are not observers of transformation — but architects of it.

We will:

- Advocate for dispatcher integration within Advanced Air Mobility operational frameworks
- Engage substantively in NextGen modernization and airspace evolution initiatives
- Evaluate how automation and AI intersect with operational control authority
- Anticipate regulatory, training, and certification implications before they are imposed
- Position ADF as the authoritative voice on operational risk management in the next-generation airspace system

If dispatch does not define its role in this future, someone else will.

A Call to Action

I am assembling a small, elite working group of ADF members who are ready to think beyond today's operation.

This team will not exist to monitor change — it will exist to influence it.

I am looking for professionals who:

- Deeply understand operational control
- Are intellectually curious about AAM, NextGen, automation, and AI
- Are willing to research, collaborate, draft position papers, and engage stakeholders
- Believe dispatch must remain a central pillar of aviation safety

If you want to help define what dispatch looks like in an AI-enabled, NextGen-integrated, AAM-expanded airspace — I invite you to step forward.

The future is being shaped now.

Let's ensure dispatch is not an afterthought in that future.

Let's ensure it is indispensable.

Respectfully,

Jake Zelman
Chairman, Advanced Air Mobility & NextGen Initiatives
Airline Dispatchers Federation

jzelman@dispatcher.org

