



New Mexico Spaceport Authority

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## **SPACEPORT RUNWAY DEDICATION INCLUDES SIR RICHARD BRANSON AND NM GOVERNOR RICHARDSON**

UPHAM, NM – The New Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA) today dedicated the nearly two-mile long “Governor Bill Richardson Spaceway” at Spaceport America, representing significant progress toward launching commercial customers into space from the desert of New Mexico. Governor Bill Richardson, Sir Richard Branson and approximately 30 of more than 380 Virgin Galactic future astronauts attended the event along with guests from around the world and watched a flyover and landing by Virgin Galactic’s WhiteKnightTwo, in a captive carry with SpaceShipTwo.

“We are celebrating the world’s first spaceway at the world’s first purpose-built, commercial spaceport,” said Governor Richardson. “New Mexico is not only helping to launch the commercial spaceflight industry, but we are launching new jobs and opportunities for the people of southern New Mexico. Today marks a significant milestone on our historic and exciting journey.”

The nearly two-mile long runway was officially named the “Governor Bill Richardson Spaceway” at the event, and Governor Richardson joined Sir Richard in placing their handprints in clay as a permanent commemoration of the historic day. NMSA Chairman Ben Woods said the board of the NMSA had met early today to formally and unanimously approve the name of the spaceway.

Sir Richard Branson commented, “It is incredible to be here today with Governor Richardson and be part of the runway dedication at Spaceport America. To see for myself how far the construction has come from when I last visited New Mexico is truly inspiring – I for one can’t wait for the grand opening – today has brought it one step closer to reality for me. The last few weeks have been some of the most exciting in Virgin Galactic’s development. Our spaceship is flying beautifully and will soon be making powered flights, propelled by our new hybrid rocket motor, which is also making excellent progress in its own test program. The investment deal with our new partners Aabar has successfully closed, securing funding for the remainder of the development program and we are seeing unprecedented numbers of people coming

forward to secure their own reservations for this incredible experience. To be here in New Mexico to witness this historic moment is the perfect end to a great month.”

Governor Richardson, Sir Richard Branson, the Virgin Galactic future astronauts and the guests were all invited to tour the terminal hangar facility, which is nearing completion. The iconic building, meeting Gold LEED standards, will serve as the operating hub for Virgin Galactic and is expected to house up to two WhiteKnightTwos and five SpaceShipTwos, in addition to all of Virgin’s astronaut preparation facilities and mission control.

Held immediately following the International Symposium for Personal and Commercial Spaceflight (ISPCS), the Spaceport America Runway Dedication marked the culmination of “Space Week” in New Mexico, and was made possible in part thanks to premier event sponsors Summit West Construction, Gerald Martin Construction Management, AECOM, Molzen-Corbin, Dekker/Perich/Sabatini, of Albuquerque, NM, and the New Mexico Tourism Department. Other speakers at the event included: Lori Garver, Deputy Administrator of NASA; George Whitesides, CEO of Virgin Galactic; Patricia Hynes, Executive Director of the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium; and Rick Homans, Executive Director of the NMSA.

Lori Garver, Deputy Administrator of NASA, said, “With the recent signing of the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 by President Obama, it is clear that our nation's future space efforts will be working even more closely than with the growing commercial space transportation industry,” She added, “Innovative approaches that foster this new commercial industry will bring more competition and opportunities that will lower the costs of spaceflight and payload services for America’s aerospace programs, and introduce new human space transportation systems.”

The 42-inch thick spaceway is designed to support nearly every type of aircraft in the world today. It is made up of 24 inches of prepared sub-grade, followed by four inches of asphalt, and finished with a 14-inch layer of concrete. The spaceway will accommodate returning launch vehicles, fly-back rocket boosters and other space launch and training vehicles.

Spaceport America has been providing commercial launch services since 2006. The state-of-the-art launch facility is under construction near Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, and is expected to become fully operational in 2011. Officials at Spaceport America have been working closely with their anchor tenant Virgin Galactic and other leading aerospace firms such as Lockheed Martin, Moog-FTS, Armadillo Aerospace, and UP Aerospace to develop commercial spaceflight at the new facility. The economic impact of launches, tourism and new construction at Spaceport America are already delivering on its promise to

the people of New Mexico.

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