NASA Advisory Council Recommendation:

The Council recommends that a small ad-hoc NASA Advisory Council (NAC) group work with NASA to identify the top three most egregious productivity and individual initiative killers (starting with FedTraveler), and determine their costs not just in money but also in employee time. This group should then make recommendations for either eliminating/replacing the offending policy and procedure or software, or replacing it with a small pilot program to establish a best-practice benchmark that might let NASA break out of (sometimes government-wide) solutions that fail to meet the interests of the agency and its people – and provide a positive example to other government agencies.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with the recommendation that the NAC should seek to identify egregious productivity and individual initiative killers as part of its NASA advisory efforts. However, NASA prefers that this new area of emphasis be adopted by all of the NAC committees as part of their normal business in lieu of the establishment of a new ad hoc NAC group. The NASA Administrator intends to highlight and discuss this new area of interest as part of his remarks at the next planned meeting of the NAC in May 2011.

Additionally, with regard to the specific recommendation to address FedTraveler as an "egregious productivity and individual initiative killer," NASA is continuing its consideration of this recommendation as new system updates are implemented, which are intended to address some of the concerns raised by the NAC. As background, FedTraveler.com is an e-Government initiative which was mandated by the Office of Management Budget and is managed by the General Services Administration (GSA). Cost savings are realized on a government-wide scale through standardization of the application and lower travel rates derived through economies of scale. GSA and several Federal agencies have conducted multiple E-gov Travel Service (ETS) 2 requirements gathering sessions, and have met with prospective contractors to discuss means to improve upon the current travel application and to simplify development efforts for interfaces with agency core financial systems. The Request for Proposal (RFP) for ETS2 was released to the public and proposals were due on November 15, 2010. The RFP greatly emphasizes the requirements for ease of navigation and intuitive screens for infrequent travelers. Federal agencies must migrate to ETS2 by October 2012.

Also of significant note is that while ETS corrective action code releases and minor system changes continue to be deployed on an on-going basis, the application will be phased out of use as Federal agencies transition to ETS2 by October 2012. Within months, NASA will begin to shift its focus from ETS management to developing the groundwork for a smooth transition to ETS2. In the interim, until the transition to ETS2 begins in earnest, NASA plans to focus priorities on internal process improvements and NASA policy updates, as exemplified by the Foreign Travel Process Improvement Team being led by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and Office of International and Interagency Relations to streamline NASA's foreign travel approval processes.