

## NASA Advisory Council Subcommittee Recommendation

Subcommittee Name: Planetary Science

Chair: Sean Solomon

Date of Public Deliberation: 2-3 October 2008

Date of Transmission to Science Committee: 9 October 2008

Short title of the proposed Recommendation

Approach to responding to MSL cost increases.

Short description of proposed Recommendation

PSS recommends that NASA make a prompt decision on a launch timeline for Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) that minimizes both the risk to the full success of that mission and the impact on other programs within PSD and SMD. Consistent with concurrent SMD policy, cost increases incurred by the MSL project should, to the extent possible, be borne by JPL, the implementing organization for the mission. Additional funds should be sought next from within the Mars Exploration Program. Impacts to non-Mars programs, as needed after those two sources of funds are utilized, should be sought through delays rather than cancellation of approved missions now under development.

Major reasons for proposing the Recommendation

As part of the response to the latest cost increases to the MSL project, a reassessment of the project's readiness for a 2009 launch is underway. Regardless of whether the launch date is slipped to 2010 or 2011 or retained in 2009, the impact of the new cost increases will be felt by other programs in PSD and SMD. While the subcommittee did not have available detailed information on latest cost figures, ATLO milestones, and schedule and technical risk to the mission for a 2009 launch, it was clear that a prompt decision on the launch timeline would reduce uncertainty and risk. The PSS was not presented with specific plans for how cost increases will be accommodated but was able to formulate principles governing how those accommodations should proceed based on a desire to localize the effects of the cost increases to the program and implementing center most responsible for the increases.

Consequences of no action on the proposed Recommendation

In the absence of this recommendation, resolution of the MSL cost overruns would take place without input from the planetary science community, thereby narrowing the base of support for whatever decision is to be made.