

# NASA Advisory Council Subcommittee Recommendation

Subcommittee Name: Planetary Science

Chair: Sean Solomon

Date of Public Deliberation: 7-8 June 2007

Date of Transmission to Science Committee:

Short title of the proposed Recommendation:

Review of planning for Delta II replacement.

Short description of the proposed Recommendation

The PSS recommends that NASA decide expeditiously on a future approach to acquiring appropriately-sized launch vehicles to replace the Delta II and make that decision and the supporting documentation public.

Major reasons for proposing the Recommendation

The Delta II has been the workhorse launch vehicle for Planetary Science Division missions, so the termination of this launch vehicle line by Boeing within the next several years raises the question of how medium-sized deep-space missions will be launched when Delta II vehicles are no longer available. The PSS heard from Alan Stern that NASA is exploring an alternate launch provider, as well as the possibility of purchasing as many as six or seven Delta II vehicles for future use. Whereas this information provides some comfort, the PSS is increasingly concerned about the future of affordable access to Delta II-class launch vehicles.

Consequences of no action on the proposed Recommendation

The loss of a launch vehicle with the capabilities of the Delta II Closure would constitute a serious and permanent loss of capability to the exploration of the solar system. Replacement with an EELV may greatly increase mission costs.