



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 14, 2011

CONTACT: Gary Barnhard

[gary.barnhard@nss.org](mailto:gary.barnhard@nss.org)

+1 301 509 0848

## **NSS Hails Stratolaunch Initiative – A Pioneering Investment in Space Transportation**

Washington, D.C. — The National Space Society (NSS) hails the announcement of Stratolaunch Systems, a Paul G. Allen Project, as a pioneering investment in space transportation. The company has been formed to build a mobile air-launch-to-orbit system that will include three primary components:

- A carrier aircraft, developed by Scaled Composites, the aircraft manufacturer and assembler founded by Burt Rutan. It will be the largest aircraft ever flown.
- A multi-stage booster, manufactured by Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies;
- A state-of-the-art mating and integration system allowing the carrier aircraft to safely carry a booster weighing up to 490,000 pounds. It will be built by Dynetics, a leader in the field of aerospace engineering.

"The Stratolaunch Initiative is another bold step towards the key goal of reducing the cost of space travel" said Gary Barnhard, Executive Director of the National Space Society. "By providing a less costly, more flexible, and timely launch capability than existing ground-based systems, the Stratolaunch team intends to achieve routine airport-like space transportation services to orbital destinations. NSS wishes clear skies ahead for their efforts," he concluded.

With an envisioned payload capability of 13,500 pounds cargo and/or crewed spacecraft delivered to Low Earth Orbit, a fully reusable first stage air-launch carrier, and the potential for evolution to a winged returnable second stage, the initiative holds great promise. More background information on the Stratolaunch concept can be found at their website: <http://stratolaunch.com/presskit.html>.

In their announcement yesterday, Stratolaunch said, "...space has long been on Allen's mind. In the close of his memoir, *Idea Man*, published earlier this year, he hinted at his plans, writing that he was 'considering a new initiative with that magical contraption I never wearied of sketching as a boy: the rocket ship.'" NSS thanks Paul for endeavoring to bring his boyhood dreams into reality in this historic way.

Since 1974, NSS has been working to bring forward the day when humans will be living and working in thriving communities beyond the Earth, and the vast resources of space are brought to bear for the dramatic betterment of humanity. Commercial space initiatives are bringing that day ever closer.

###

### **About the National Space Society**

The National Space Society (NSS) is an independent, grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to the creation of a spacefaring civilization. Founded in 1974, NSS is widely acknowledged as the preeminent citizen's voice on space. NSS counts thousands of members and more than 50 chapters in the United States and around the world. The society also publishes *Ad Astra* magazine, an award-winning periodical chronicling the most important developments in space; and hosts the annual International Space Development Conference, among other activities. For more information about NSS, visit [www.nss.org](http://www.nss.org).