

# NASA to replace shuttle

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NASA's plan to replace the space shuttle with a spacecraft to take astronauts to the moon and Mars has been approved, U.S. officials said.

"It's a thumbs-up for NASA to pursue the shuttle-derived vehicle," said John M. Logsdon, director of the Space Policy Institute at George Washington University and an adviser to the NASA initiative. "The question is the schedule, not the basic approach."

The redesign would address the dangers of firing engines and falling debris, which caused the disintegration of the Columbia in 2003. However, to save time, many of the shuttle's parts would be used for the space craft, the New York Times reported Friday.

The new spacecraft would separate the jobs of hauling people and cargo into orbit and would put the payloads atop the rockets -- as far as possible from the firing engines.

Michael D. Griffin, NASA's administrator, met with White House officials Wednesday and got preliminary approval for the initiative despite funding issues, aerospace experts told the Times.

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