

Airlines

White House Moves to End Onboard Air Traffic Delays

The Office of the Inspector General took airlines to task late last month on the problem of onboard flight delays. The IG office issued a report to the DOT that said many of its recommended solutions had been made back in 2001. Now President Bush has entered the fray. At his direction, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters has formed a group of airline, airport and travel officials and given them the job of developing a series of measures to reduce congestion at New York's three major airports by the end of the year. Secretary Peters said that the DOT will develop options for reducing flight schedules at JFK. The announcements came after an Oval Office meeting with President Bush. New York is key to the solution, according to Peters, because one-third of the nation's air traffic goes in, out or over New York airspace every day, accounting for three-quarters of all chronic air delays. At the same time, an aviation industry group, the Air Transport Association, called for the appointment of an aviation "czar" to oversee an initiative to end air traffic delays by eliminating air capacity limitations. James May, head of the ATA, advised against considering economic measures that would dampen demand. (Source: DOT, White House and ATA press releases).

Clear Opens at SFO

Clear, which operates registered traveler lanes at U.S. airports, has opened its express security lanes at both domestic terminals at San Francisco International Airport (SFO). The Clear lanes in the International Terminal will open in the middle of this month. Clear pre-screens travelers and, once they've been approved, provides them with an identity card with an encrypted fingerprint or iris image, that gives them access to a separate, faster lane through airport security checkpoints. It costs \$99.95 annually. Clear is now set up in Albany, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Little Rock, New York's JFK, Newark, Orlando, Reno, San Jose, Westchester County, N.Y., and soon, La Guardia. (Source: Clear press release).

Continental Plans Expansion at Cleveland Airport

Continental Airlines plans to increase its capacity at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport by 40 percent over the next two years. It will initially operate another 50 flights, most on regional jets, and add 20 new nonstop destinations by next summer. Airport improvements planned in tandem with this development include an expanded security checkpoint area, a new meet-and-greet waiting area and additional ticket counters. A concession redevelopment program is underway to provide more retail and food and beverage options for travelers at Cleveland Hopkins -- at prices that are comparable to non-airport locations. Continental and the Airport are also reviewing different options to expand and/or relocate the current Federal Inspection Services and customs hall. (Source: Continental press release).

Alaska Air to Introduce In-Flight WiFi Next Year

Alaska Airlines plans to introduce in-flight wireless internet service next year using Row 44's satellite-based connectivity. Alaska will test the system on a 737 aircraft in the spring; depending on the outcome, it will then equip its 11-4aircraft fleet with the service. There will be wireless hotspots installed in the aircraft cabin. (Source: Alaska Airlines press release).

JetBlue Adds Flights from Northeast to Florida

JetBlue Airways has added to its Florida service out of Boston's Logan International Airport, adding five new nonstop flights -- one each to Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Orlando, Tampa, and West Palm Beach. JetBlue is also adding nonstop service to Orlando this winter from Burlington, Vt., Portland, Maine, and Buffalo and Rochester, N.Y. (Source: JetBlue press release).

Hotels

St. Regis Washington, D.C., Reopens

The landmark St. Regis Washington, D.C., will reopen in December, after a 16-month, multi-million dollar renovation. The project included a makeover of all guest rooms and public areas and new landscaping. There are now 175 guest rooms, instead of 193, because the hotel has an additional 11 suites. Rooms now have including wireless Internet, 32" LCD televisions, DVD players, Pratesi linens and Remède amenities, and bathrooms with mosaic tiles and custom-designed brass fixtures. (Source: St. Regis press release).

Car Rental and Rail

Avis/Budget Expands Electronic Toll Collection

Avis Rent A Car and Budget Rent A Car have expanded electronic toll collection with new services in Florida, Colorado and Puerto. Avis and Budget already offer vehicles equipped to work on the E-ZPass network in the northeastern United States, I-Pass in the metropolitan Chicago area and PlatePass in Houston. Fees range from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day plus toll charge. (Source: Avis Budget Group press release).

Amtrak Expands At-Seat Cart Service on Acela

Amtrak has expanded the food cart service on its New York-Washington Acela Express trains. The at-seat cart service is now available on ten trains Monday through Wednesday and 12 on Thursdays and Fridays. This is in addition to enhanced menu for *Acela Express* and upgraded meal service for First Class passengers and recent capital improvements to tracks and signals in the Northeast corridor. (Source: Amtrak press release).



Spotlight On.....

What Worries Travelers Most

The Airline industry's on time performance for the first seven months of this year was the worst since comparable data began being collected in 1995 and that is worrying travelers, who say they are more concerned about flight and baggage delays than they are about terrorism or hurricanes.

- ***34.8 percent have reservations about flying over the next few months.***
- ***47.4 percent say they are most concerned about flight delays and cancellations***
- ***10 percent are more concerned about terrorism***
- ***27 percent consider missing a portion of their trip due to flight delays or cancellation a worst-case travel scenario***
- ***37+ percent considered being stranded on the tarmac for hours "the worst"***
- ***17.8 percent are worried about losing luggage***

Source: RUF Strategic Solutions