

Air Transport Association Commends DOT Plan to Ease New York Airspace Congestion

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Urges Continued Government-Industry Collaboration

The Air Transport Association of America (ATA), the industry trade organization representing the leading U.S. airlines, commends Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Mary Peters and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Acting Administrator Bobby Sturgell for their leadership and commitment in helping to find solutions to the frustrating, unacceptable congestion at New York area airports.

"We applaud Secretary Peters for her efforts to engage all stakeholders and for her strong leadership in appointing a czar to implement the industry-supported plan to redesign the New York area airspace," said ATA President and CEO James C. May. "With today's announcement, we believe that DOT and FAA have together taken a big step in the right direction. The czar must have real authority to make real decisions."

Flight caps are undesirable for air travelers but, under existing circumstances, airlines have little choice but to live with caps as a temporary measure. ATA believes that the 77 airspace improvement recommendations put forward in the Aviation Rulemaking Committee process will provide the opportunity to first restore and then add needed new capacity. Implementation of several of these recommendations announced by the FAA are good early steps to address Summer 2008 concerns, but work on all of the measures must be undertaken as soon as possible.

ATA continues to believe that the Worldwide Scheduling Guidelines (WSG) must play a role as part of enhanced management of a difficult set of issues. The WSG is an internationally recognized process with a proven track record of success, currently in place at 140 high-traffic airports worldwide. The WSG is specifically designed to facilitate the efficient allocation and exchange of slots at heavily congested airports.

ATA noted that while the industry has indicated its willingness to work with DOT and Congress to consider the use of auctions to allocate true new capacity, work remains to be done.

"It is important that all of us -- the administration, airports, airlines, air traffic controllers, general aviation, pilots and all other stakeholders -- move forward as a unified group," said May. "The only way we will achieve our shared goal of a modernized, next-generation air transportation system that accommodates all users safely and efficiently is by working together in an open and collaborative manner. We are off to a good start, but more work remains."

ATA airline members and their affiliates transport more than 90 percent of all U.S. airline passenger and cargo traffic.

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