

Air Transport Association Says Artificially Constraining Demand Does Not Reduce Delay

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FAA and DOT Can Reduce Delays by Managing Airspace More Effectively and Efficiently

The Air Transport Association of America (ATA), the industry trade organization for the leading U.S. airlines, today testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on the summer outlook for air travel regarding congestion and delays.

The airline industry is literally being decimated by the current fuel price situation. For 2008, ATA is forecasting losses in the range of approximately \$10 billion for U.S. airlines, and have already announced 30,000 job eliminations. Eight U.S. airlines have ceased operations, two others are in bankruptcy and more will come. Hundreds of aircraft have been parked, likely forever, and later this year, even more communities will face air service losses that will continue to undermine their economies and the nation's economy.

"With our fuel bill up \$20 billion since last year to a total of almost \$62 billion, it is easy to understand why the airlines are so intent on streamlining our nation's air traffic management system to eliminate as much delay as possible," said ATA Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer John M. Meenan. "When it comes to fuel, eliminating unnecessary fuel burn caused by an outdated air traffic management system is our top priority."

Meenan continued, "As we start the busy summer travel period, meaningful relief in New York will 'unglue' the rest of country, further reducing fuel burn and wasted time. Although New York has 12 percent of operations, systemwide it has 45 percent of the flight delays. There is no question that the ripple effect from relief in New York will be significant throughout the country.

"So, you might ask yourself what is DOT doing about the ever growing congestion -- to make sure passengers, shippers and airlines can get to where they want to go on time -- the answer: not much," said Meenan. "Instead of moving forward with the capacity enhancements and airspace redesign with every available resource and with all deliberate speed, the DOT is, incredibly, pushing congestion pricing and slot auctions -- completely unproven textbook experiments that some graduate student might love to pursue but that no one in the aviation world has used successfully. In the next few months, the DOT seems intent on leaving a legacy of failed, but extremely costly, experiments that do nothing to reduce congestion and flight delays in New York or anywhere else."

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

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