



WASHINGTON AVIATION SUMMARY

April 2025 EDITION

CONTENTS

I.	REGULATORY NEWS	1
II.	AIRPORTS	4
III.	SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY	7
IV.	TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT	8
V.	ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT	10
VI.	U.S. CONGRESS	12
VII.	BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS	16
VIII.	EUROPE/AFRICA	17
IX.	ASIA/PACIFIC/MIDDLE EAST	18
X.	AMERICAS	20

For further information, including documents referenced, contact:

Joanne W. Young
Kirstein & Young PLLC
1750 K Street NW
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20006
Telephone: (202) 331-3348
Fax: (202) 331-3933
Email: jyoung@yklaw.com

<http://www.yklaw.com>

The Kirstein & Young law firm specializes in representing U.S. and foreign airlines, airports, leasing companies, financial institutions and aviation-related companies before U.S. Government agencies, Congress, the courts and in commercial and financing matters.

©2025 Kirstein & Young PLLC.

I. REGULATORY NEWS

1. Bryan Bedford Nominated as FAA Administrator.

Republic Airways President and CEO Bryan Bedford was nominated to serve as Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator. Bedford has more than 30 years of experience in the airline industry. He joined Republic in 1999 and previously served as President and CEO of Mesaba Airlines and Business Express. He holds multi-engine and instrument pilot ratings. Airlines for America (A4A), Regional Airline Association and other groups applauded the choice and urged the Senate to swiftly confirm his nomination.

2. Steven Bradbury Confirmed as DOT Deputy Secretary.

Steven Bradbury was confirmed as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Bradbury served in the first Trump Administration as DOT General Counsel, Acting Deputy DOT Secretary and Acting DOT Secretary. In the Bush 43 Administration, he served as Principal Deputy and Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel. “Bradbury’s extensive transportation experience makes him uniquely qualified for this role,” said A4A, which looks forward to working closely with him under the leadership of Secretary Sean Duffy to ensure that air traffic control (ATC) facilities “are fully staffed, infrastructure is modernized and aviation remains the safest mode of transportation in the world.”

3. NTSB Recommends Restricted Helicopter Ops Around DCA.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released a preliminary report on the January 29 mid-air collision of a U.S. Army Sikorsky UH-60L Black Hawk helicopter and a Bombardier CRJ700, operated by PSA Airlines as American Airlines Flight 5342, over the Potomac River near Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). All 67 aboard the two aircraft were killed. Due to “intolerable risk,” NTSB urgently recommended that FAA permanently prohibit helicopter operations near DCA when runways 15 and 33 are in use, and designate an alternative helicopter route. . . . FAA accepted NTSB recommendations and permanently restricted non-essential helicopter operations around DCA and eliminated mixed helicopter and fixed wing traffic. FAA is conducting a review “using A.I. and advanced analytical tools at other airports with high volumes of helicopter traffic to identify potential safety improvements.” . . . Virginia Congressman Don Beyer, who represents a district that includes DCA, applauded FAA’s actions and, with other local Congressional Democrats, requested that FAA and the Department of Defense (DOD) “permanently reduce significant aviation traffic within the

region surrounding the airport, short of emergency response services. To the maximum extent practicable, military training flights should be conducted outside the National Capital Region.” (See also Section VI, item 1.)

4. NTSB Releases Preliminary Report on Learjet 55 Medevac Crash.

NTSB investigators recovered engines, the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and the enhanced ground proximity warning system of the Learjet 55 Medevac that crashed into a densely populated area shortly after departure from Northeast Philadelphia Airport, on January 31; all six people on board and a motorist on the ground died. The CVR was at the site of initial impact, at a depth of eight feet. Wreckage was sent to a secure location in Delaware for examination. Surveillance videos of the crash and numerous witness statements were obtained. . . . NTSB is investigating a March 13 incident in which American Airlines Flight 1006 diverted to and landed safely at Denver International, after the crew reported engine vibrations. While taxiing to the gate, an engine caught fire and all 172 passengers and six crew evacuated the Boeing 737-800 as flames spread; several were taken to hospitals with minor injuries. Flight 1006 was traveling from Colorado Springs to Dallas Fort Worth.

5. Preliminary Report Released on Delta Collision at Toronto Pearson.

Transportation Safety Board (TSB) of Canada released a preliminary report on the February 17 Delta Connection accident at Toronto Pearson. Upon landing in gusty wind, the Bombardier CRJ-900, operated by Endeavor Air, “impacted the runway, and following the initial impact, parts of the aircraft separated, notably a wing and the tail section, and a fire ensued.” The fuselage came to rest upside down and passengers and cabin crew evacuated from the right forward door and an emergency exit window. The cockpit door was unusable, so the flight crew exited from the emergency hatch in the cockpit ceiling. Of the 80 passengers and crew, 21 were injured and many hospitalized. TSB investigators are assisted by NTSB, FAA, Greater Toronto Airports Authority, NAV CANADA, the operator, and the aircraft and engine manufacturers.

6. DOJ Launches Anticompetitive Regulations Task Force.

The U.S. Department of Justice launched the Anticompetitive Regulations Task Force “to support the Administration’s mission to unwind laws and regulations that hinder business dynamism and make markets less competitive,” in areas that include airlines. . . . In related news, U.S. airlines are contesting regulations advanced by DOT during the Biden administration, including upfront disclosure of ancillary fees and wheelchair handling reform.

7. **FAA to “Supercharge” Air Traffic Controller Hiring.**

DOT Secretary Sean Duffy announced a plan to “supercharge” air traffic controller hiring. This includes a 30% increase in starting salaries for some candidates, and changing the current eight-step hiring process to five steps. . . . A4A applauded the initiative, noting, “the U.S. is almost 3,000 controllers short at a time when we are seeing record air travel volumes and increased reliance on air cargo shipments.”

8. **FAA Launches Final Initiative of Runway Safety Portfolio.**

FAA is rolling out the Runway Incursion Device (RID) at 74 ATC towers. The “memory aid for controllers” indicates when a runway is occupied or closed; it can identify up to eight runways and will be a standard technology, replacing a variety of devices at towers. Other projects include the Surface Awareness Initiative system (SAI), operational at 18 airports with plans to install it at 32 others by yearend. SAI uses Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADB-S) data to display surface traffic to controllers at airports that do not have a surface surveillance tool. The Approach Runway Verification system (ARV) is in 85 towers; it provides controllers with visual and audible alerts if an approaching aircraft is lined up to land on the wrong airport surface, or the wrong airport. . . . In related news, A DOT Office of Inspector General (OIG) report said mitigation efforts have improved runway safety, but FAA lacks an integrated approach for analyzing runway incursion data and identifying risks.

9. **Air Lease Founder Steven Udvar-Házy to Retire.**

Air Lease Corp. (ALC) announced that Executive Chairman Steven Udvar-Házy will retire on May 2 and continue to serve as non-executive Chairman. Known as the founder of the aircraft leasing industry, Udvar-Házy co-founded International Lease Finance Corp. (ILFC) in 1973, which, said ALC, “helped transform the aviation landscape with the commercialization of operating leases, enabling airlines significantly greater flexibility in business operations.” He founded Air Lease in 2010, which currently has a \$28 billion fleet and \$17 billion orderbook. He was the largest contributor to the National Air and Space Museum project at Washington Dulles International Airport, with a \$65 million donation, and it was renamed the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in his honor.

II. AIRPORTS

1. Heathrow Closed for 18 Hours Amid Power Supply Failure.

London Heathrow was closed for 18 hours on March 21, when a fire in a nearby electrical substation shut off the airport's power supply. More than 1,300 flights were canceled. No evidence of foul play was found, and the government ordered an investigation "to understand any wider lessons to be learned on energy resilience for critical national infrastructure." . . . After restarting operations, Heathrow "welcomed 250,000+ passengers, with punctual departures and security queues under five minutes for nearly all." . . . IATA Director General Willie Walsh said if critical infrastructure of national and global importance is totally dependent on a single power source without an alternative, "then it is a clear planning failure by the airport [and raises] the question of who bears the costs of taking care of disrupted travelers. We must find a fairer allocation of passenger care costs than airlines alone picking up the tab when infrastructure fails. Until that happens, Heathrow has very little incentive to improve," said Walsh, a former British Airways CEO.

2. Lance Lyttle to Lead Orlando Aviation Authority.

Lance Lyttle will serve as the next CEO of Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, overseeing Orlando International and Orlando Executive Airport. Lyttle currently is Managing Director of Aviation for Seattle-Tacoma and has held executive positions with Houston Airport System and Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta. At Orlando, he succeeds Kevin Thibault, who announced his resignation due to family illness. At Seattle, Aviation Division COO Arif Ghouse will serve as Interim Managing Director.

3. JetBlue Announces "Major Refresh" of JFK Terminal 5.

A "major refresh" of JetBlue's Terminal 5 at Kennedy was announced by the airline, with Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and Fraport USA. Some 40 new concessions open this year and a redesigned center concourse and other improvements will be completed in 2026. Terminal 5 serves 165 JetBlue flights and 35,000 customers per day. The Port Authority is conducting a \$19 billion overhaul of Kennedy. . . . Frontier selected Terminal 6 for its future operations at Kennedy, joining Air Canada, Aer Lingus, ANA, Austrian A, Brussels, Cathay Pacific, Condor, JetBlue, Kuwait, Lufthansa, Norse and SWISS. T6 is being developed in two phases, with first six gates opening in 2026 and construction completion expected by 2028. Features include 10 gates, customs/border control facilities and a ground transportation center. A public-private partnership between the Port Authority and JFK Millennium

Partners, Terminal 6 will connect with Terminal 5 to create an anchor terminal on the airport's north side. Frontier currently operates from Terminal 7.

4. **Milwaukee Building Major Air Cargo Facility.**

Milwaukee Mitchell International broke ground on a 337,000-square-foot air cargo facility that will accommodate five B747-400 aircraft concurrently, and generate \$1.3 million in annual aircraft landing fees and \$1 million in annual ground lease rents and fees. Completion is projected for 2026. The site was the former 440th Airlift Wing, which was turned over to the airport in 2008. The facility will include a new Milwaukee County Highway Maintenance Facility to support county and state transportation needs.

5. **EU Finds Shortcomings in Schiphol Noise Reduction Plan.**

The European Commission raised several concerns about the Netherlands' plan to introduce noise reduction measures at Amsterdam Schiphol. Following the Balanced Approach process, the Commission assessed whether the measures are cost-effective, non-discriminatory and proportionate, and identified shortcomings. Notably, the plan only addresses commercial aviation, exempting general aviation and business aviation from the measures, despite their contribution to noise, and it excludes the effect of fleet renewal. Also, the Netherlands did not provide sufficient evidence to support its approach or explain how it applies to Schiphol specifically, and has not fully explored the potential of noise-reducing flight procedures, such as innovative landing and navigation techniques. Dutch authorities will examine the Commission's decision and inform on their next steps before introducing the measures, which include reducing annual number of flights from 500,000 to 478,000, and reducing number of nighttime flights from 32,000 to 27,000. "We expect the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management to take the European Commission's decision to heart and follow the recommendations before implementing capacity restrictions," said KLM. "This way, the sector retains a future perspective while maintaining a balance with the environment, keeping the Netherlands connected to the rest of the world."

6. **German Airport Strikes Cause Massive One-Day Disruption.**

Flights in Germany were canceled during a day of strikes organized by the United Services Union (ver.di), which is demanding better working conditions, more leisure time, and fair pay for all federal and local public sector employees. Airports affected by the industrial action included Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt/Main, Cologne/Bonn, Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Hanover, Bremen, Hamburg, Berlin-Brandenburg, and Leipzig-Halle.

7. **\$7.8 Billion Ethiopian Airport Project Planned.**

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew Bekele signed a Letter of Intent with the African Development Bank (AfDB) for development of the \$7.8 billion Abusera International Airport Project. The airport will be situated in Bishoftu, about 40 km from Addis-Ababa Bole International, which is expected to reach its annual 25 million passenger capacity limit soon.

8. **Vietnam Airlines, SATS to Build Cargo Terminal at Long Thanh.**

Vietnam Airlines and cargo handler SATS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to build and operate an air cargo terminal at the new Long Thanh International Airport (LTIA) in Vietnam. The companies will also collaborate on strategic initiatives, including enhancing the support of ground and cargo handling services across VNA's international network. LTIA, near Ho Chi Minh City in Dong Nai province, is meant to alleviate congestion at Tan Son Nhat International. LTIA will launch operations in phases. Phase 1 will open by second half 2026, with capacity to handle up to 25 million passengers and 1.2 million tonnes of cargo annually, and eventual full capacity of 100 million passengers and 5 million tonnes of cargo by 2050. VNA plans to launch Vietnam's first all-freighter airline. The flag carrier has a fleet of 93 aircraft and currently flies to 22 domestic and 30 international destinations.

III. SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY

1. DHS Ends Collective Bargaining for TSA Security Officers.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced it is ending collective bargaining for the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) to remove “bureaucratic hurdles that will strengthen workforce agility and enhance productivity and resiliency, while also jumpstarting innovation.” . . . A coalition of unions, including American Federation of Government Employees, Communications Workers of America and Association of Flight Attendants, sued DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, DHS, TSA and a TSA senior official, seeking injunctive relief to “stop the administration from breaking the contract, eliminating union representation, and stripping workers of their bargaining rights”; the contract covers 47,000 TSOs.

2. Aviation Security Leaders Call for Digital Identity

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) called for rapid adoption of digital identity technologies to enhance aviation security and operational efficiency, at the Sydney Leaders Week Conference, hosted by Qantas and attended by industry experts and government representatives from Australia, Canada, China, New Zealand, the UK and the U.S. They emphasized the need for collaboration in implementing Verifiable Credentials (VC) and Decentralized Identifiers (DIDs) to reduce fraud and unauthorized access; enable secure, cross-border, interoperable identity verification; and streamline document verification. “The technology is ready and proven,” said IATA. Participants also identified key actions for governments to drive the industry’s digital transformation. IATA’s One ID initiative promotes globally interoperable digital identity standards, enabling passengers to verify their travel documents before departure and move through the airport using biometric recognition instead of physical documents. One ID works in harmony with ICAO’s Digital Travel Credential ensuring security and efficiency while maintaining privacy and compliance with global regulations. IATA is also advancing its Aviation Security Trust Framework, which sees regulatory alignment, cross-sector collaboration and infrastructure as critical components to realize the benefits of digital identity in global aviation.

IV. TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

1. IATA Holds Inaugural World Data Symposium.

IATA held its inaugural World Data Symposium (WDS) to “explore data, technology and cybersecurity in shaping the future of aviation.” Hosted by Aer Lingus in Dublin, there were more than 700 participants, with broad consensus reached on key priorities. (1) With improvements in artificial intelligence and predictive analytics, the contribution of aviation’s rich data collection will drive improvements in efficiency, passenger experience, and sustainability. The industry needs to address the opportunity by establishing clear data ownership structures, investing in new solutions and attracting talent. (2) Innovations such as cloud computing, automation, and digital identity are proving their value in improving efficiency while reducing costs. The industry needs to modernize standards and optimize this potential by integrating solutions so that the passenger journey is seamless, from booking to baggage delivery. (3) The need for robust cybersecurity grows in tandem with the use of technology, particularly as it integrates various players in the travel and air cargo value chains. The industry must share information more efficiently to protect critical infrastructure, ensure data integrity, and safeguard passenger trust.

2. Boom Breaks Sound Barrier With No Sonic Boom.

Boom Supersonic’s XB-1 flight demonstrator “made no audible sonic boom” during flight tests, as seen in specialized NASA photographs. During XB-1’s second supersonic flight on February 10, NASA teams on the ground used Schlieren photography, a technique to visualize shock waves resulting from XB-1 pushing through the air at supersonic speeds. In January, XB-1 became the first independently developed jet to fly faster than the speed of sound, and the first civil supersonic jet built in America. Boom is developing Overture, an airliner that will fly at twice the speed of today’s jets and is optimized to run on up to 100% sustainable aviation fuel. Overture’s order book stands at 130 aircraft, including orders and pre-orders from American, United and Japan Airlines. Boom is working with Northrop Grumman for government and defense applications of Overture. Suppliers and partners collaborating with Boom on the Overture program include Aernnova, Aciturri, Collins Aerospace, Eaton, Honeywell, Latecoere, Leonardo, Safran Landing Systems, Universal Avionics, and the U.S. Air Force.

3. Joby, Virgin Atlantic Announce Partnership

Virgin Atlantic and California-based Joby Aviation will partner on the launch of electric air taxi service in the UK, building on an existing agreement between Joby and Delta, which owns a 49% stake in Virgin Atlantic. The partnership aims to offer seamless, zero-emission, short-range journeys across the UK, starting with regional and city connections from Virgin Atlantic hubs at Heathrow and Manchester. Virgin Atlantic “will support Joby’s go-to-market efforts in the UK through marketing the service to their customers, engaging regulators alongside Joby and helping to build support for the development of landing infrastructure at key airports.” Joby’s electric air taxi is designed to carry a pilot and up to four passengers at speeds of up to 200 mph, and is expected to be deployed on routes of up to 100 miles.

4. IAG Launches IAGi Ventures.

IAG launched corporate venturing arm IAGi Ventures, with plans to invest up to €200 million over the next five years in “companies that are shaping the future of aviation.” IAG invited entrepreneurs who are “at a start-up or scale-up with an exciting solution for the aviation industry” to get in touch.

V. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Fuel Bill for Global Airline Industry.

The global average jet fuel price for week ending March 14 was \$86.69 per barrel, down 8.4% on prior month's average, and down 12.5% on prior year's average, according to the Jet Fuel Price Monitor, a joint IATA-Platts initiative.

2. ICAO Committee Proposes More Stringent Noise, CO2 Standards.

ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) made 31 recommendations that establish a methodology on monitoring and reporting CO2 emissions reductions against the ICAO Long Term Global Aspirational Goal (LTAG) of net zero carbon emissions; proposed more stringent aircraft noise and CO2 emissions standards; and made progress on non-CO2 emissions, climate adaptation, airports, operations, fuels and CORSIA. The ICAO CO2 emissions standard would be applicable to new aircraft type designs as of 2031, to new deliveries of current in-production aircraft types from 2035 and to new aircraft type designs as of 2029. A new noise certification standard for supersonic aircraft was also recommended, which would be applicable from 2029.

3. IATA CO2 Connect Enhanced with SAF Accounting.

The IATA CO2 Connect emissions calculator has been enhanced to account for carbon emissions reductions related to sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) usage. This follows recent publication of the IATA SAF Accounting & Reporting Methodology, which includes specific accounting rules and practices on how to include SAF in per-passenger CO2 data. Initially, CO2 Connect will apply equal per-passenger emission reductions across an airline's network, meaning that all flights will benefit from an equal (percentage) reduction based on total SAF purchases. In future enhancements, the ability to allocate per-passenger SAF emission reductions to specific routes will be added. IATA CO2 Connect uses real operational data, such as aircraft type-specific fuel consumption, directly contributed by airlines. This approach contrasts with other calculators that primarily rely on modeled averages. Some 60 airlines are now contributing data to CO2 Connect.

4. JetBlue Marks First Regular Supply of SAF in New York.

JetBlue and its fuel partners marked the first-ever regular supply of SAF for commercial air travel in the region at New York Kennedy. JetBlue has a 12-month agreement with World Fuel for at least one million gallons of neat SAF to be provided by Valero; corporate business partners help cover the cost

premium over traditional jet fuel. JetBlue also has SAF delivered to its operations at San Francisco and Los Angeles International airports.

5. Study: Potential \$45 Billion Needed to Meet SAF Targets by 2030.

Capital expenditures required to meet SAF demand by 2030 could reach \$45 billion, depending on technology mix, according to a study by World Economic Forum and Kearney, “Financing Sustainable Aviation Fuels: Case Studies and Implications for Investment.” SAF producers, governments and investors will need to work together to de-risk production and scale employment. As quoted by International Airport Review, a World Economic Forum official said “banks will often view SAF projects as high risk due to their novelty, extended timelines, and reliance on emerging technologies. Project developers must bear this in mind when attempting to attract capital. For SAF to reach scalable production, a shift in financing mechanisms will be necessary.”

VI. U.S. CONGRESS

1. Senate Hearing on DCA Mid-Air Collision.

The Senate Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing to examine findings from NTSB's preliminary report on the January 29 mid-air collision of American Airlines 5342 and a U.S. Army Blackhawk helicopter near Reagan Washington National (DCA). . . . In her testimony, NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy said work continues on site, including diving operations to recover personal effects and remaining portions of the wreckage. Two urgent safety recommendations concerning helicopter routes near the airport, and FAA "took swift action to ensure safety and restrict helicopter traffic from operating over the Potomac River near DCA." . . . FAA Acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau said he plans to establish a Safety Risk Management Panel and engage with aviation stakeholders to identify hazard areas involving helicopter and fixed-wing interactions. He noted that FAA received more than 10,000 applications during a recent air traffic controller hiring surge, of which more than 8,300 were referred to testing. . . . U.S. Army Aviation Director Brigadier General Matthew Braman clarified that the helicopter crew was fully qualified and had FAA-required academic training to operate in the area of the accident. NTSB is still investigating whether the Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) Out transponder was operating as designed, not programmed, or turned off at the time of the accident. Army policy does not authorize ADS-B Out-Off operations for routine, non-sensitive, or non-classified missions and always requires aircrews conducting ADS-B Out-Off operations to operate their transponder in Mode 3 A/C which emits information required by air traffic services but with less identifying information. The Army has issued interim guidance to the force to elevate the level of risk approval authority to operate with ADS-B Out-Off and will formally update its policy as the NTSB investigation continues. The Army and other military services and other agencies that operate helicopters in the area will participate in an FAA-led working group to develop a new helicopter route that supports national security, law enforcement, and medical helicopter flight operations. "We are working to ensure any actions we take in response to the accident are fully informed by fact-based conclusions that come out of the investigations which are ongoing [and] fully support all efforts to ensure a tragedy such as this is never repeated," he added.

2. **House Oversight Committee Examines DC Airspace Safety.**

The House Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs opened an investigation into military use of airspace in the National Capital Region, following the mid-air collision on January 29. In a letter to DOD Secretary Pete Hegseth, Subcommittee Chairman William Timmons (R-S.C.) and Ranking Member Suhas Subramanyam (D-Va.) requested a briefing on circumstances surrounding the event and measures taken by the military to ensure such calamities do not occur in the future. “Washington, D.C.’s airspace is among the most complex and heavily regulated in the nation. DCA operates within the tightly controlled Flight Restricted Zone (FRZ), making it one of the busiest and most sensitive airspaces in the country,” they wrote. “DOD plays a critical role in managing and securing this airspace, with military aircraft frequently conducting operations in and around the National Capital Region...As authorities continue to assess the circumstances of the incident, it will be critical to identify any contributing factors and ensure mitigation measures are implemented to enhance future airspace safety.” According to FAA, they noted, there have been 30 near-midair collisions since 1987 around DCA, a third of which involved military aircraft, including seven helicopters.

3. **House Hearing on ATC Infrastructure and Staffing.**

The House Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing to examine the current state of the U.S. ATC system. . . . During his testimony, Airlines for America President and CEO Nicholas Calio held up a paper strip and floppy discs to show the outdated technology used by controllers today. Calio called for emergency funding signed into law that will ensure FAA has enough skilled controllers and technicians and more training capacity; a plan to ensure they can procure and field modern technology; and a long-term fix to the budgeting process that will allow FAA to plan long-term capital projects. “We want action not political debate,” said Calio. “This should not be a partisan or jurisdictional issue.” . . . Nick Daniels, President of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), noted that controllers require rigorous training, a mastery of complex systems, and the ability to perform under immense pressure. They work short-staffed, often six days a week, ten hours a day, using outdated equipment and in run-down facilities. The bipartisan FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 included many first-time provisions such as directing FAA to conduct maximum hiring for controllers. FAA is starting to make progress. Sustained maximum hiring for at least the next five years will help FAA approach staffing levels needed. . . . Subcommittee Chairman Troy Nehls (R-TX) and others noted budgetary constraints and unstable funding, and said President Trump and DOT Secretary Duffy have voiced “support for historic investments in air traffic control facilities and technologies.”

4. Markey Urges Probe of Musk's Airline Safety Claims.

Ed Markey (D-Mass.), member of the Senate Commerce Committee, urged Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) to hold a hearing to investigate Elon Musk's posts on X suggesting that the FAA ATC communications system "is single digit months to catastrophic failure, putting air traveler safety at serious risk." Such comments could cause panic among air travelers, Markey wrote. Given his far-reaching role in the government and involvement with FAA's information technology systems, if he has discovered new vulnerabilities, the Committee should know immediately. If Musk cannot provide evidence of his claims, it raises serious questions about whether he is using his role as a senior government official to enrich his company SpaceX, currently competing for FAA contracts.

5. Democrats Probe FAA-Starlink Connection; SpaceX Response.

Senator Markey wrote to FAA Acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau with questions about FAA's recent decision to deploy three Starlink terminals, which provide broadband internet connectivity through a satellite network, from Musk's SpaceX. "Given Musk's dual positions as CEO of SpaceX and widespread role in the Trump administration, this decision creates at least an appearance of a conflict-of-interest," wrote Markey. With Musk reportedly having shipped 4,000 Starlink terminals to FAA recently, Markey requested that FAA turn over documents and answer questions in writing by April 9, regarding the terminals, e.g., if contracts were awarded through a competitive bidding process; full value of contract; and if SpaceX engineers signed ethics agreements related to their dual employment with FAA and SpaceX. . . . House Democrats sent a letter to Acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau regarding reports that FAA "is facing undue pressure" to consider cancelling its long-term multi-billion-dollar communications system modernization contract with Verizon, in favor of starting a new contract with Elon Musk's Starlink, "in violation of fair and proper procurement processes." . . . SpaceX responded to concerns on X, saying: it is working in coordination with L3Harris—the prime contractor for FAA's telecommunications infrastructure—and FAA to test the use of Starlink as one piece of the infrastructure upgrades so badly needed along with fiber, wireless, and other technologies. Starlink is a possible partial fix to an aging system. There is no effort or intent for Starlink to 'take over' any existing contract. Given the critical safety issues, SpaceX signed a loan agreement with L3Harris, providing Starlink kits and service free of charge for an initial testing period. Beyond this initial testing deployment, SpaceX is working with L3Harris and the FAA to identify instances where Starlink could serve as a long-term infrastructure upgrade for aviation safety.

6. **Flight Attendants Applaud Reintroduction of PRO Act.**

The Association of Flight Attendants applauded House and Senate Democrats and Independent Senator Bernie Sanders for reintroducing the “Protecting the Right to Organize Act” (PRO Act), “comprehensive labor legislation to protect the rights of workers to stand together and bargain for fairer wages, better benefits and safer workplaces.” The legislation was renamed in honor of former AFL-CIO President Richard L. Trumka. “The billionaire class is fighting with all its might to put down attempts by workers to exercise their constitutional right to unionize,” said Sanders. “That includes the decision by President Trump to illegally fire National Labor Relations Board Member Gwynne Wilcox and effectively shut down the NLRB. Without a functioning NLRB, corporate bosses can illegally fire unionizing workers, flagrantly violate labor laws and render free and fair union elections near impossible.”

7. **“Aviation Workforce Development Act” Reintroduced.**

Representative Mike Collins (R-Ga.) reintroduced the “Aviation Workforce Development Act” to make training at FAA-certified commercial pilot and aircraft maintenance technician schools a qualified expense for 529 college savings plans. The bipartisan H.R. 1818 amends the tax code so Americans pursuing a career in aviation have the same tools as those seeking four-year degrees, with zero increased cost to taxpayers, said Collins.

VII. BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS

1. ICAO Assists Syria With Aviation Sector Recovery.

ICAO and Syria's General Authority for Civil Aviation (GACA) signed a Management Service Agreement, which aims to modernize Syria's aviation infrastructure and capabilities and raise air transport operations to international standards. ICAO aims to support Syria in conducting a comprehensive gap analysis to identify key challenges and develop a strategic action plan. The collaboration will also focus on evaluating and enhancing institutional structures to establish a solid foundation for regulatory and operational efficiency. ICAO will actively engage with donor States and international organizations to mobilize financial and technical support to ensure successful implementation of this initiative.

2. EU, South Africa Agree to Advance Transport Relations.

The European Union (EU) and South Africa agreed to advance transport relations, at their 8th Summit, held in Cape Town, and committed to intensify work on a horizontal agreement for air services; i.e., one negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of EU Member States, in order to bring all existing bilateral air services agreements between EU Member States and a given third country in line with EU law. They also acknowledged the need to undertake joint work to boost investment opportunities to support production at scale of SAF.

VIII. EUROPE AND AFRICA

1. Delta Adds Service to Morocco, Accra.

Delta is adding three-times-weekly Boeing 767-400ER nonstops from Atlanta to Marrakech, on October 25, and daily Airbus A330-900neo service from Atlanta to Accra, beginning December 1. Delta operates nonstop flights to five African destinations.

2. Lufthansa Group Has Strongest Revenue Year.

In 2024, Lufthansa Group increased revenue by 6% year-on-year to €37.6 billion, the strongest in its history due to a new peak in load factor. Passenger numbers increased by 7% to over 130 million. Lufthansa expects moderate capacity growth of around 4% in 2025, amid challenges that include delays in aircraft deliveries. This will be “a year of transformation for us with a clear goal,” said Chairman and CEO Carsten Spohr, “to further strengthen our position as the global number one outside the United States.”

3. Air Europa, Etihad Plan Strategic Partnership.

Air Europa and Etihad Airways are in discussions to pave the way to upgrade existing code share and frequent flyer cooperation to a strategic partnership, and a potential wet lease operation with an Air Europa aircraft between Madrid and Abu Dhabi,” said an Etihad official. Etihad is increasing service to Air Europa’s hub in Madrid from summer. . . . Air France-KLM and Lufthansa have made offers to acquire a stake in Air Europa, according to news reports. The Spanish carrier is owned by Globalia Group. Air France, KLM and Air Europa are SkyTeam members.

4. EU, South Africa Agree to Advance Transport Relations.

See Section VII, item 2.

IX. ASIA/PACIFIC AND MIDDLE EAST

1. Alaska to Add Seoul, Tokyo Nonstops from Seattle.

Alaska Airlines will begin Airbus A330-200 nonstop service between Seattle and Seoul Incheon on Hawaiian Airlines on September 12. Daily flights between Seattle and Tokyo Narita begin on May 12.

2. Virgin Australia Promotes Dave Emerson to CEO.

Dave Emerson was appointed CEO of Virgin Australia, effective March 14. He succeeds Jayne Hrdlicka, who indicated her intention to retire last year. Emerson has been Chief Commercial Officer since 2021 and has 25 years of experience in the aviation and tourism industries. . . . The Australian government approved Qatar Airways' 25% investment in Virgin Australia, and final approval from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for the integrated alliance is expected. Subject to a decision from the International Air Services Commission (IASC) "on what is an uncontested allocation of air rights," flights from Sydney, Brisbane and Perth to Doha will start in June, and from Melbourne to Doha in December. Majority shareholder Bain Capital, Virgin Group and Queensland Investment Corp will retain shareholdings in Virgin Australia.

3. Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran to Step Down.

Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran has resigned and will leave the airline in mid-October "to take on a new challenge." During his five-year tenure, he dealt with challenges including COVID-19 and engine issues affecting the Boeing and Airbus fleets. A search for his replacement is underway, said Chair Therese Walsh.

4. Air New Zealand, Air India to Code Share.

Air New Zealand and Air India signed an MoU to explore the introduction of direct service between India and New Zealand by end of 2028, subject to new aircraft deliveries and regulatory approvals. Currently, Air New Zealand customers travelling between New Zealand and India transit through Singapore. . . . The Star Alliance partners will establish a code share partnership on 16 routes between India, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, subject to regulatory approvals. Customers will be able to travel from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai on Air India, and connect at Sydney, Melbourne or Singapore onto Air New Zealand-operated flights to Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Queenstown. . . . The MoU also outlines Tourism New Zealand's commitment to growing inbound tourism from the Indian

market. Tourism New Zealand's research shows that 18 million people in New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai are actively considering traveling to New Zealand, making it a key emerging market. More than 80,000 international travelers arrived from India last year, 23% more than in 2019.

5. **Air India, ANA Expand Code Share.**

Air India's four weekly Boeing 787-8 nonstops from Delhi to Narita now operate to Haneda, "to provide passengers faster and more affordable access to central Tokyo." On April 1, subject to regulatory approvals, Air India will expand its code share agreement with Star Alliance partner All Nippon Airways (ANA). Air India will place its code on ANA flights between Tokyo Haneda and Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Okinawa, Osaka and Sapporo. ANA will place its code on Air India's flight between Delhi and Tokyo Haneda, and Delhi to six Indian destinations.

6. **CCCS Approves SIA, ANA Joint Venture.**

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) granted conditional approval of proposed commercial cooperation between Singapore Airlines and ANA. The airlines addressed concerns about competition on the Singapore-Tokyo route by agreeing to maintain seat capacity on an aggregated basis at stipulated levels, among other things.

7. **Etihad, Ethiopian Launch Strategic Joint Venture.**

Etihad and Ethiopian launched a strategic joint venture that includes a code share arrangement, subject to regulatory approval. Etihad will start nonstop flights from Abu Dhabi to Addis Ababa on October 1, and Ethiopian will fly to Abu Dhabi from July 15.

8. **ICAO Assists Syria With Aviation Sector Recovery.**

See Section VII, item 1.

9. **Air Europa, Etihad Plan Strategic Partnership.**

See Section VIII, item 3.

X. AMERICAS

1. Southwest Ends Free Checked Bag Policy.

Southwest is ending its free bag-check policy for non-priority customers and will introduce a new Basic fare on lowest priced tickets, effective May 28. Reward programs were altered as well, with an “aim to deepen and reward loyalty [among] its most engaged customers” and “create new opportunities to reach consumers who value fare above everything else.” The new initiatives “will attract new customer segments we don’t compete for today, and return to the levels of profitability that both we and our shareholders expect,” said Bob Jordan, President, CEO and Board Vice Chairman. Previously announced changes include assigned seating and extra legroom options, scheduled overnight flights, and a partnership with Icelandair. “We recognize these changes may be a disappointment to some,” said Jordan, “but know we’re committed to building a Southwest that will continue to offer you low fares, convenient flights to destinations you want, and a travel experience that is rewarding.”

2. Spirit Emerges from Financial Restructuring.

Spirit Aviation Holdings announced that Spirit Airlines has emerged from its financial restructuring, completing a consensual, deleveraging transaction that equitizes approximately \$795 million of funded debt. As part of the restructuring, the company received a \$350 million equity investment from existing investors to support future initiatives. With significantly less debt and greater financial flexibility, Spirit emerges “in a stronger financial position to continue our transformation and investments in the guest experience,” said President and CEO Ted Christie; “we’re moving forward with our strategy to redefine low-fare travel with our new, high-value travel options.” Spirit’s reorganization plan was confirmed by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, “with overwhelming support from a supermajority of the company’s loyalty and convertible noteholders.” Spirit will continue to be led by Christie and its existing executive team. A reconstituted Board includes, in addition to Christie, six directors with significant industry and financial leadership experience: Robert A. Milton, David Siegel, Timothy Bernlohr, Eugene Davis, Andrea Fischer Newman and Radha Tilton. Upon Spirit’s emergence, common stock issued by Spirit Airlines, Inc. was cancelled. Newly issued shares now held by Spirit’s new owners are expected to trade in the over-the-counter marketplace. The company expects to re-list its shares on a stock exchange.

3. **Alaska, Hawaiian Labor News.**

Alaska Airlines flight attendants ratified a new three-year contract, which provides “an immediate, double digit wage increase, boarding pay and retroactive pay,” said Association of Flight Attendants (AFA).” Hawaiian flight attendants reached a tentative agreement on a contract extension through February 2028, which includes three pay raises, inclusion in the Alaska Air Group profit sharing program, and scheduling improvements; vote closes April 17. “This provides economic improvements while joint contract negotiations begin,” said AFA.

4. **Frontier Launches Seattle Paine Field, Dominican Republic Service.**

Frontier begins service from Seattle Paine Field in Everett, Wash., to Denver, Las Vegas and Phoenix in June, and from Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, subject to government approval. . . . “Some airlines are walking away from what travelers love,” said Frontier CEO Barry Biffle, alluding to recent changes at Southwest, “but we’re running towards it.” The ultra-low fare carrier announced “sweeping changes to its product and customer service offerings,” for a limited time period, including a free carry-on bag, free seat selection and free flight changes. “If travelers show us they love this deal, we might just make it permanent,” said Biffle.

5. **Delta Adds Service to Morocco, Accra.**

See Section VIII, item 1.

6. **Alaska to Add Seoul and Tokyo Nonstops from Seattle.**

See Section IX, item 1.