



# WASHINGTON AVIATION SUMMARY

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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.

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## I. REGULATORY NEWS

### 1. Chris Rocheleau Named Acting FAA Administrator.

Chris Rocheleau was named Acting Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), where he has served in numerous executive roles. Most recently he was COO of the National Business Aviation Association. . . . Steven Bradbury, nominee for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT), under Sean Duffy, advanced through the Senate and is expected to be confirmed. 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.

### 2. FAA Restricts DCA Helicopter Traffic After Potomac River Crash.

Following the January 29 mid-air collision of a Bombardier CRJ700 and a Sikorsky H-60, on approach to Reagan Washington National Airport, DOT Secretary Sean Duffy announced that FAA will restrict helicopter traffic in the area over the Potomac River around the airport and stretching to Wilson Bridge. Exempt are helicopters entering the airspace for lifesaving medical support, active law enforcement, active air defense, or presidential transport helicopter missions that must operate in this restricted area. . . . The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is investigating that accident, which involved American Eagle Flight 5342, operated by PSA Airlines, and a U.S. Army helicopter. There were 64 aboard the jet and three on the helicopter; none survived. Parties to the investigation include PSA Airlines, GE Aerospace, Sikorsky Aircraft, FAA, U.S. Army, National Air Traffic Controllers Association, Air Line Pilots Association, Association of Flight Attendants, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Collins Aerospace, Transportation Safety Board of Canada, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries RJ Aviation (Bombardier) and Transport Canada. . . . In other news, NTSB is investigating the crash of a Learjet 55 Medevac into a densely populated commercial and residential area shortly after departure from Northeast Philadelphia Airport, on January 31. The plane was en route to Springfield-Branson National Airport in Missouri. All six people on board died. On the ground a motorist died and 24 persons were injured. DOT Secretary Sean Duffy, and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro toured the impact site. . . . Delta Connection Flight 4819, operated by Endeavor Air, crashed and flipped upside down in snow while landing at Toronto Pearson on February 17. All 80 people on board the Bombardier CRJ-

900 were evacuated; 21 injured passengers were transported to local hospitals and released. The Transportation Safety Board of Canada is leading the investigation. Delta offered \$30,000 to each passenger with “no strings attached.” . . . NTSB is investigating the crash of a Bering Air Cessna 208B Grand Caravan en route from Unalakleet to Nome on February 6. The pilot and nine passengers were killed. The U.S. Coast Guard said the wreckage was found on sea ice in the Norton Sound about 34 miles from Nome. Bering Air operates scheduled passenger and cargo flights to 32 communities along the northwest coast of Alaska.

**3. A4A, IATA Ask DOT to Freeze, Roll Back Rules.**

Airlines for America (A4A) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) separately asked DOT to freeze pending regulations and roll back some approved rules. “We urge the Trump Administration to take immediate action to forestall DOT’s march toward further re-regulation of the vital commercial aviation industry,” wrote IATA, listing priorities. These include termination of the “Airline Passenger Rights” Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM), the “Enhancing Transparency of Airline Ancillary Service Fees” rule, and the “Competition in Air Transportation” Request for Information (RFI). Modification of the “Refunds and Other Consumer Protections” rule and the “Family Seating in Air Transportation” Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was requested. A review of disability rights regulations was requested, such as the recently finalized “Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs.”

**4. Airlines Appeal Part of Wheelchair Rule.**

A4A and members sued DOT in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, claiming parts of the “Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers With Disabilities Using Wheelchairs” rule exceed DOT’s statutory authority and represent regulatory overreach. The rule states that damage to or delay in returning a wheelchair is a violation of the Air Carrier Access Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The rule also mandates penalties for airlines that lose or damage wheelchairs. The rule was finalized in December and took effect in January, laying the groundwork, said former DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg, “for a possible future rule that would address passengers staying in their own wheelchairs onboard airplanes.” Earlier, in October, DOT issued a landmark \$50 million penalty against American Airlines for violations of disability laws, including unsafe physical assistance that resulted in injuries and undignified treatment of wheelchair users.

**5. FAA Probationary Employees Terminated.**

Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS), AFL-CIO, said several hundred probationary employees at FAA were terminated by the Administration. “This decision did not consider the staffing needs of the FAA, which is already challenged by understaffing. Staffing decisions should be based on an individual agency’s mission-critical needs. To do otherwise is dangerous when it comes to public safety. And it is especially unconscionable in the aftermath of three deadly aircraft accidents in the past month.” . . . In a tweet, DOT Secretary Sean Duffy said, “FAA alone has a staggering 45,000 employees. Less than 400 were let go, and they were all probationary, meaning they had been hired less than a year ago. Zero air traffic controllers and critical safety personnel were let go.”

**6. Travel Reform Needed Before Mega-Decade of Events.**

Security reforms, urgent modernization of air traffic control (ATC) technology and solutions to the controller shortage are needed “to ensure President Trump delivers a ‘golden age of travel’ ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the 2025 Ryder Cup and America’s 250th anniversary,” says a new report from the Commission on Seamless and Secure Travel. Thanksgiving-like travel extremes are expected at U.S. airports 50 days next year, doubling to 100 days in 2028. Based on the report, U.S. Travel Association called on Congress and the Administration to, among other things, establish a task force chaired by a senior White House official to bring sustained leadership and focus across the federal government; provide full-strength consular staffing for visa processing and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staffing at airports; end the Passenger Security Fee; increase technology funding to ensure that within five years all travelers can pack larger liquids in carry-ons, keep electronics and IDs in their bags, and keep their shoes, jackets and belts on; and shorten customs wait times for Americans returning home from abroad by leveraging biometrics and advanced vetting to remove the requirement to meet with a CBP officer unless they have something to declare.

**7. DOT Suspends Enforcement re Wheelchair Rule and Liability Increases**

The DOT has suspended enforcement on the Final Rule entitled “Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers With Disabilities Using Wheelchairs.” The DOT has also suspended enforcement of increases to liability limits airlines may impose on travelers for denied boarding and mishandled baggage compensation. These suspensions extend until March 20 and reflect the President’s Memorandum, “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review,” calling for agencies to pause rulemakings to review questions of fact, law, and policy.

## II. AIRPORTS

### 1. ACI World Projects 22.3 Billion Passengers by 2053.

Global passenger numbers are expected to reach 17.7 billion by 2043 and 22.3 billion by 2053, a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.4% from 2024 to 2043, and 3% from 2024 to 2053, according to Airport Traffic Forecasts 2024–2053, released by Airports Council International (ACI) World. International traffic is forecast to grow at a CAGR of 3.3%, and domestic traffic at 2.8%. The increase is driven by rising middle-class travel demand in emerging markets, strengthened international travel, and continued investments in airport infrastructure. Short-term challenges include geopolitical tensions, economic instability, trade shifts like reintroduced tariffs, and supply chain bottlenecks, which may slow recovery in some regions. Global air cargo is projected to grow steadily, with a CAGR of 2.7% from 2024 to 2043 and 2.4% from 2024 to 2053; evolving trade policies and supply chain disruptions could introduce volatility in the sector. Number of aircraft movements expected to increase significantly, reaching 149 million by 2043 and 176 million by 2053.

### 2. Ricky Smith Named General Manager of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta.

Ricky Smith was named General Manager of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta, effective April 2. Current Interim General Manager Jan Lennon will be promoted to Executive Deputy General Manager. Smith most recently served as Executive Director and CEO of Maryland Aviation Administration where he was responsible for management and operations of Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, Martin State Airport, and regional aviation activities throughout Maryland.

### 3. Austin-Bergstrom Begins \$4 Billion Expansion.

Austin City Council approved more than \$2 billion in construction contracts to expand Austin-Bergstrom International. A \$4 billion project, “Journey With AUS,” includes a new arrivals and departures hall, an extension of the Barbara Jordan Terminal, as well as a concourse with 20 gates and midfield taxiways. Total passenger traffic for 2024 was around 22 million; enplanements almost 11 million.

### 4. Delta to Anchor New Tampa International Terminal.

Delta signed a 20-year agreement with Tampa International to anchor the new \$1.5 billion Airside D terminal, and will use at least 6 of 16 gates and operate one of two lounge spaces. Scheduled to open in 2028, Airside D will be the airport's first new terminal in 20 years. It will feature two levels plus a

mezzanine for the lounges, an international passenger arrival processing area on the first floor, glass boarding bridges and shopping and dining. The airport's longest operating and largest air carrier, Delta currently operates out of six gates and a Delta Sky Club on Airside E. The airport serves 25 million passengers annually.

**5. Houston Opens Terminal E Ticketing Lobby.**

Houston George Bush Intercontinental opened an expanded Terminal E Ticketing Lobby, which provides United passengers with a dedicated space for check-in and security screening. The project is part of a \$1.4 billion overhaul of the airport's international facilities. By the end of the year, all international airlines will locate from Terminal D to Terminal E. United's growth plans in Houston include a \$2.6 billion renovation and expansion of Terminal B.

**6. London Stansted Prepares for Growth with Single Runway.**

London Stansted is conducting a consultation through March 10 for its Sustainable Development Plan (SDP), which, said Managing Director Gareth Powell, "is about making the best use of our single runway, providing education and training opportunities, managing our environmental impact and helping relieve the pressure on local roads." Stansted currently serves 30 million passengers a year, with up to 51 million expected by the 2040s.

### **III. SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY**

#### **1. U.S., UK Pilot One Stop Security Program.**

The U.S. Transportation Security Administration and UK Department for Transport rolled out a new program, One Stop Security (OSS), in partnership with American Airlines, that allows customers to connect to non-UK destinations through London Heathrow from Dallas Fort Worth without going through security screening a second time.

#### **2. Frankfurt Deploys 360-Degree Walk-Through Scanners.**

Following a one-year test phase at Concourse A in Terminal 1 at Frankfurt, the German Federal Police authorized full-scale use of the Rohde & Schwarz QPS Walk2000. The 360-degree walkthrough scanner, which will be added to security lanes in Terminal 1 and the new Terminal 3, “provides significantly greater comfort and convenience at security checks: instead of having to freeze in an awkward posture for scanning, travelers can simply walk through the scanner at a normal speed.” The scanning is supported by AI-based detection software. The millimeter-wave technology penetrates clothing while an avatar pinpoints potentially dangerous objects in real time. If an alarm is triggered, security personnel can focus on the specific indicated area instead of having to completely rescan the passenger. About 18,000 passengers pass through the checkpoint daily.

#### **3. Airlines, Airports Increase Cybersecurity, Biometrics Investment.**

According to SITA's 2024 Air Transport IT Insights, 66% of airlines and 73% of airports call cybersecurity “an area of focus” and are upgrading IT infrastructure, moving to the cloud, and safeguarding data. Over half of airports plan to roll out biometrics for check-in and bag drop by 2026; 70% of airlines expect to adopt biometric ID management systems in the same timeframe. In 2024, the industry's overall IT spend increased and was estimated to reach \$37 billion for airlines, and \$9 billion for airports. Airlines are using generative AI, large language models, and machine learning to improve flight operations, customer service, and fuel efficiency. Airports are focusing on data platforms and predictive analytics to make real-time decisions and manage passenger flow more effectively. “The report represents the views of over 250 senior airline and airport executives, covering a significant share of global passenger traffic,” said SITA.

## **IV. TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT**

### **1. Sabre Signs Agreements with Iberojet, Nok Air, Hainan, Saudia.**

Sabre renewed an agreement for its full suite of Radixx products with Iberojet. Part of Ávoris, a global tour operator in the Iberian Peninsula, Iberojet offers scheduled and special flights and wet lease operations. . . . Sabre is adding content from Thailand budget carrier Nok Air to its Global Distribution System (GDS). This is the first time Nok Air has offered its content through a GDS. The airline flies Boeing 737-800s domestically and to India and China. . . . Under a new long-term agreement, Hainan Airlines will use Sabre's Fares Manager and Contract Manager to manage and optimize international fares. In first half 2024, Hainan and its subsidiaries operated 1,400 Chinese and international routes. . . . Saudia's New Distribution Capability (NDC) content is now accessible through Sabre's global travel marketplace, the first time the flag carrier has made its NDC content available on a GDS. Saudia flies to 100 destinations on four continents and across Saudi Arabia.

### **2. Southwest Partners with Expedia for Flight Bookings.**

Expedia Group is the first major online travel agency to offer Southwest's network of 117 destinations in 11 countries. Group brands include Travelocity, Hotwire, Orbitz and CheapTickets.

### **3. Breeze Signs Distribution Agreement with Amadeus.**

Breeze Airways signed a distribution agreement to make its content available through the Amadeus Travel Platform. Since it began operations in 2021, Breeze has been using New Skies, a reservation, retailing and e-commerce solution from Amadeus unit Navitaire. Through the partnership with Amadeus, "we will be able to leverage access to a global network of travel sellers," said Breeze CEO and founder David Neeleman. Breeze also will deploy Amadeus eTicket Server, allowing distribution as a 'ticketing carrier' and providing technology needed for interline partnerships. . . . Icelandair signed a renewed and expanded agreement deploying Amadeus' Altéa NDC Technology. Implementation will start in Q1 2025. . . . Amadeus strengthened its partnership with Traveloka with an agreement to bring more NDC enabled content to the Southeast Asian travel platform. . . . Amadeus renewed its partnership with Microsoft, which "leverages cloud & AI technologies to drive innovation and explore new products for the travel industry." Through the partnership, Amadeus has migrated more than 50% of its applications to the public cloud. Among collaborations, Cytric Easy, an online booking and expense management tool for corporate travel embedded in Microsoft Teams,



will be enhanced with the power of Generative AI “to create a new engaging conversational experience.” Amadeus Virtual Airport Operations Centre enables stakeholders like airlines, airports, border control, and service providers to co-operate in a fully digitalized airport operations center. . . . Air France-KLM selected Amadeus Nevio to update its current systems and move to an “Offer and Order” native system. Among benefits of the multi-year collaboration, customers will have a single order that contains travel details, including services provided by third parties; will be able to make modifications to travel and ancillary services more easily; and will benefit from more tailored options that better match their preferences and needs. “This transformation will not only bring us a best-in-class Order Management System, but also simplify our IT ecosystem through the phase out of several legacy applications,” said Air France-KLM Group officials.

## V. **ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

### 1. **Fuel Bill for Global Airline Industry.**

The global average jet fuel price for week ending February 7 was \$95.63 per barrel, down 1.0% on prior month's average, and down 3.4% on prior year's average, according to the Jet Fuel Price Monitor, a joint IATA-Platts initiative.

### 2. **IATA, 123Carbon Collaborate on Interoperability for SAF Registries.**

IATA and 123Carbon announced a strategic collaboration to develop interoperability between their respective Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) registries. This “will increase transparency, avoid emissions reporting errors—including double issuance—and streamline certificate management across SAF registries.” Key elements are a unique identifier and alignment of relevant data points to exchange between registries and a dispute resolution process. . . . The IATA SAF Registry will launch in April with the aim of facilitating the broadest possible use of SAF in aviation's decarbonization by standardizing the market for SAF certificates. SAF certificates are issued after a SAF batch is registered and contains product and environmental attribute information. As part of its preparation for the Registry's launch, IATA recently released the IATA SAF Accounting and Reporting Methodology. . . . 123Carbon is the first independent platform for carbon 'insetting' across all transport modes. It supports fuel suppliers, fleet operators, forwarders and cargo owners in the issuance, management and transfer of Environmental Attribute Certificates (EACs) across all modalities and technologies, including SAF. Next to the central registry, 123Carbon also offers a private Book & Claim solution that SAF suppliers and airlines can use to allocate company-branded SAF certificates to their customers in a private environment. This is also regarded as a critical instrument for forwarders that operate across different transport modes and seek a single solution to allocate their environmental benefits.

## VI. U.S. CONGRESS

### 1. Moran, Duckworth Lead Senate Aviation Subcommittee.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) announced Aviation Subcommittee assignments for the 119th Congress. They are Chairman Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), Eric Schmitt (R-Mo.), Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.), and Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.); and Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.), John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.), John Fetterman (D-Pa.), and Andy Kim (D-N.J.).

### 2. Industry Coalition Calls for Additional ATC Funding.

After recent accidents involving commercial flights, an industry coalition asked Congress for additional ATC funding. “We must support air traffic controller workforce hiring and training, modernize and deploy state-of-the-art air traffic control facilities and equipment, implement procurement and program efficiencies and facility realignment, and address budget reforms for the Airport & Airway Trust Fund,” wrote the group. “We are aligned on not pursuing privatization of U.S. air traffic control services and believe it would be a distraction from these needed investments and reforms.” Priorities noted included exempting FAA from government shutdowns.

### 3. Senators Urge FAA to Address ATC Staffing Shortages.

Following the January 29 fatal collision near Reagan National and increasingly frequent near-misses at airports, Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and John Hoeven (R-N.D.) asked FAA Acting Administrator Chris Rochelau, in a letter, to “work with Congress and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association to increase funding for operations, modernize facilities and equipment, expand the FAA training academy’s capacity, strengthen partnerships with aviation schools across the county [sic] and other ways to prevent partisan brinkmanship around government funding from shutting down operations.” In Fiscal Year 2023 there were 503 ATC lapses that FAA preliminarily categorized as “significant,” a 65% increase from previous year, they wrote, citing a recent New York Times investigation. During that period, air traffic increased by about 4%.

### 4. Cruz Stresses Need to Modernize ATC.

Addressing the Aero Club of Washington, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Texas) stressed the need for Congress to review the outdated state of the U.S. ATC system highlighting inefficiencies, staffing

shortages, and technological and structural deficiencies compared to other countries, and called on stakeholders to actively participate in modernization. The midair collision over the Potomac was entirely preventable, he said; “everyone in this room has a role in preventing the next accident.” Cruz also noted that Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg will testify before the Committee in April about progress on fixing production and safety issues following the Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 incident last year.

5. **Cantwell to Duffy: Musk’s Involvement in FAA is Conflict of Interest.**

Elon Musk’s involvement in FAA’s oversight of our air transportation system is “a clear conflict of interest,” wrote Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) to DOT Secretary Sean Duffy. FAA has legal responsibility for safety oversight of companies with commercial space transportation licenses; Musk’s SpaceX rocket launches share the airspace with commercial airplanes. SpaceX was fined by FAA for failing to comply with specific requirements in its launch license. Musk, in turn, “called for firing former FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker.” “We have ethics and recusal laws for a reason—to prevent corporate interference in protecting the public interest,” she wrote. Cantwell is Ranking Member of the Senate Transportation Committee and senior member of the Senate Finance Committee.

6. **House Democrats: EOs “Sowing Chaos” in Aviation Industry.**

The President’s rapid-fire Executive Orders (EO) affecting infrastructure spending rules and air traffic controller staffing, plus guidance from the Office of Management and Budget pausing all federal financial assistance, “are sowing chaos in an industry that counts on long-term certainty and will raise project costs,” wrote Democratic members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to DOT Secretary Sean Duffy. They urged him to provide clear guidance on DOT’s planned actions to implement the President’s objectives with respect to infrastructure spending and eligibilities; make publicly available, on DOT’s website, an up-to-date list of all grants subject to or under review pursuant to these EOs; communicate to Congress in advance of changes to grant solicitations or grant requirements, including reissuance of Notices of Funding Opportunity; and provide clarity to project sponsors on how to demonstrate compliance with longstanding and routinely reauthorized DOT Disadvantaged Business Enterprise. . . . The Committee, in a separate letter, urged swift implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, “in the wake of the tragic midair collision near Reagan National.” The legislation “provides clear direction for expediting improvements to the nation’s aging ATC systems by requiring the FAA to conduct an audit of all legacy systems of the NAS to determine the operational risk, functionality and security of these systems,” they wrote. “Intense focus by the DOT and FAA in

carrying out these reforms would be among the most effective actions you could currently take to help make our skies safer and protect the flying public. We implore you not to get bogged down by unnecessary and speculative distractions at such a crucial moment.”

**7. Blumenthal Probes “Indiscriminate Termination” of FAA Personnel.**

Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Ranking Member of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI), in a letter urged DOT Secretary Sean Duffy “to immediately reverse the Trump Administration’s politically motivated terminations” of safety-critical FAA employees and “demanded answers about the Administration’s “indiscriminate termination of FAA personnel,” citing recent incidents, including the deadly collision over the Potomac River. “Despite your assurances to the contrary, the FAA employees fired to date include safety-critical positions such as personnel hired for FAA radar, landing and navigational aid maintenance and maintenance mechanics, aeronautical information specialists, aviation safety assistants and management and program assistants,” Blumenthal wrote. “Now is not the time to frantically discard FAA employees that work tirelessly to ensure the safety of every aircraft that takes to the skies.” He also noted Trump’s disbanding of the Aviation Safety Advisory Committee. He asked Duffy to promptly provide to the Subcommittee by February 28 information and records on recent aviation incidents and names, titles and other details about FAA employees terminated on or after February 14.

**8. House Hearing on Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems.**

The House Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing to discuss unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), or drones. More than one million drones are registered with the FAA and 1.12 million are expected to be registered by 2028. In December, more than 5,000 drone sightings in New Jersey were reported to authorities. “Now is the time to establish a properly scaled, well-balanced, and legally sound framework for counter-drone authorities and corresponding technologies,” said Chair Troy Nehls (R-Texas). The “Counter-UAS Authority Security, Safety, and Reauthorization Act,” would pave the way for scalable integration of counter-UAS technologies and ensure the safety of the flying public and people on the ground. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), Ranking Member of the House Transportation Committee, and Nehls said they hope to reintroduce and pass “this critical legislation.”

## **VII. BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS**

### **1. ICAO Summit Sees Multiple Achievements.**

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) held its fourth Global Implementation Support Symposium in Abu Dhabi. The conference advanced ICAO's 2026-2050 Strategic Plan, which envisions “a safe, secure and sustainable international civil aviation system that connects the world for the benefit of all nations and people.” Achievements at the Symposium included: 21 new bilateral and multilateral agreements on building aviation capacity; a \$1 million Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Global Aviation Award through a partnership with the UAE government; a commitment from France for training 1,000 aviation professionals (2025-2027); launch of Global Sustainable Aviation Marketplace; and industry support for ICAO FINVEST Hub initiative, which aims to support infrastructure projects in SAF, low-carbon aviation fuels, and other green energy solutions. Artificial intelligence was a key theme, with experts exploring its role in enhancing efficiency, optimizing training systems, and shaping the future of aviation education. Morocco will host the Symposium in 2026.

### **2. EU, UK Update Russian Aviation Sanctions.**

The newest European Union (EU) Russian sanctions package includes additional restrictions on airlines and airports. It extends the flight ban to enable the listing of third-country carriers conducting domestic flights within Russia or supplying aviation goods to Russian airlines or for domestic flights in Russia. If listed, these airlines will not be allowed to fly to the EU. A ban on specific Russian infrastructure includes two Moscow airports (Vnukovo Airport and Zhukovsky) and four regional airports. . . . In its newest sanctions package, the UK named Vladislav Feliksovich Filev, founder of JSC Siberia Airlines, the largest private airline company in Russia; and Roman Viktorovich Trotsenko, who owns Novaport Holding, which controls 22 regional Russian airports, and is the founder and former majority shareholder of the Aeon Corporation, which operates in Russia's extractives, transport and chemicals sectors.

## VIII. EUROPE AND AFRICA

1. **American Adds Honolulu, Madrid, Naples from O'Hare.**

American announced new destinations from O'Hare including Chicago's only nonstop service to Naples; the Boeing 787-8 flights begin May 6. B787-8 flights to Hawaii start October 26, and to Madrid on March 30.

2. **JetBlue Adds Boston Transatlantic Flying.**

JetBlue will introduce daily nonstop seasonal service from Boston Logan to Madrid and Edinburgh on May 22. The flights will operate on Airbus A321-series aircraft. . . . JetBlue and TAP Air Portugal extended their partnership to include reciprocal award travel.

3. **Lufthansa Begins ITA Integration.**

Integration of ITA Airways is underway, said Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr. "We want to push ahead with the merger quickly, so that ITA and its passengers, as well as the guests of our other passenger airlines, can quickly benefit from the advantages of an expanded Lufthansa Group." From March 30, ITA will move into Terminal 1 in Frankfurt and Terminal 2 in Munich and enjoy mutual lounge access, code share connections and a coordinated European flight schedule. ITA has initiated withdrawal from SkyTeam and is preparing to join Star Alliance.

4. **Norse Atlantic Begins Los Angeles-Athens in June.**

Norse Atlantic will begin flying between Los Angeles and Athens four times a week on June 3, with fares starting at \$269. Founded by CEO and major shareholder Bjørn Tore Larsen in 2021, Norse Atlantic operates Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Routes from Los Angeles also include London, Paris and Rome.

5. **EU, UK Update Russian Aviation Sanctions.**

See Section VII, item 2.

## **IX. ASIA/PACIFIC AND MIDDLE EAST**

### **1. Delta to Launch Los Angeles to Melbourne Nonstops.**

Delta will launch Airbus A350-900 service from Los Angeles to Melbourne in December, its third nonstop destination in Australia, joining Sydney and Brisbane. . . . Delta is “leveraging its hub at Incheon to enhance connectivity between the Americas and Asia.” Delta and partner Korean Air operate 18 daily flights connecting 290 destinations in the Americas and 80 in Asia. Delta currently operates 35 weekly flights to Incheon from Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis and Seattle, and in June will launch nonstops from Salt Lake City, the only direct flight linking that city to Asia. In 2024, Incheon handled 70 million connecting passengers in total, 2.61 million on routes to the Americas. Incheon has an expanded Terminal 2 and a new runway, increasing capacity to 160 million passengers.

### **2. Zipair Tokyo Adds Service to San Jose, Vancouver.**

Japan Airlines unit Zipair Tokyo will increase flights from five to six weekly to San Jose Mineta (May 6-August 12), and Vancouver (May 8-August 14), from Narita.

### **3. Etihad to Launch Service to Atlanta.**

Etihad will begin four weekly Airbus A350-1000 flights from Abu Dhabi to Atlanta on July 2, to increase to daily on November 1. Abu Dhabi has a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Preclearance facility; passengers boarding there arrive in the United States and “can simply collect their bags and go or proceed seamlessly to their connecting flights.”

### **4. MH370 Search Resumes.**

A new search is underway for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, the Boeing 777 that disappeared en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, with 227 passengers and 12 crew on board. Maritime exploration firm Ocean Infinity will use a search vessel and autonomous underwater vehicles to scour the seabed in an area of about 5,792 square miles off the coast of Perth in Western Australia, according to press reports.



## **X. AMERICAS**

### **1. Southwest Announces First-Ever Reduction in Workforce.**

Southwest is implementing a reduction of approximately 1,750 employee roles, focused mostly on corporate overhead and leadership positions. Separations will be substantially complete by end of second quarter; full-year 2026 savings expected to be approximately \$300 million. “This decision is unprecedented in our 53-year history,” said Bob Jordan, President, CEO and Vice Chairman of the Board. . . . Former Breeze Airways President Tom Doxy was named Southwest EVP and CFO, effective March 10. He previously held leadership roles at United, Allegiant and US Airways. . . . Southwest amended an existing agreement with minority stakeholder Elliott Investment Management, allowing an increase in shares.

### **2. Spirit Receives Court Confirmation of Reorganization Plan.**

Spirit Airlines’ reorganization plan was confirmed by U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, and the company expects to emerge from Chapter 11 in the coming weeks. Under the approved plan, Spirit will equitize \$795 million of funded debt, receive \$350 million of new equity investment and issue \$840 million aggregate principal amount of new senior secured debt to existing bondholders upon emergence. Spirit also will enter into a new revolving credit facility of up to \$300 million. Spirit vendors, aircraft lessors and holders of secured aircraft indebtedness will not be impaired. . . . Spirit rejected a new merger proposal submitted by Frontier Group Holdings and submitted a counterproposal which was rejected by Frontier.

### **3. Breeze to Open Crew Base at Akron-Canton.**

Breeze Airways is opening a new crew base at Akron-Canton Airport this summer. The carrier’s eleventh base will bring more than 60 pilot, flight attendant, and maintenance jobs to the community over the next three years, and enable the airline to station aircraft at the airport overnight. Breeze offers 10 nonstops and four one-stops to Akron-Canton.

### **4. Brazil's Azul Eliminates \$2.1 Billion in Debt, Financial Obligations.**

Azul's Board approved a capital increase that gives lessors equity in lieu of nearly \$550 million in obligations. The Brazilian company concluded negotiations worth over \$2.4 billion with its bondholders, lessors and manufacturers, in January, resulting in elimination of \$2.1 billion in debt and financial obligations, and closed a previously announced capital injection of \$525 million in Superpriority Notes due 2030. Azul concluded its out-of-court

restructuring process, initiated in 2024 amid “a challenging external scenario, with the devaluation of the real against the dollar; operational costs highly impacted by price of aviation fuel; high rate of litigation; the global supply chain crisis; and floods in the south of Brazil.” With a capital injection of more than \$525 million, we will increase our liquidity and ensure we are stronger than ever, said CEO John Rodgerson, adding that 15 new Embraer E2s added to the fleet this year, “will be extremely valuable to solidify our plan and expand access to air travel across the country.” Azul is Brazil's largest airline in number of flights and destinations served. Azul and GOL parent Abra Group in January agreed to combine their businesses in the Brazil market, subject to approvals. GOL expects to emerge from Chapter 11 in May.

**5. Delta to Launch Los Angeles to Melbourne Nonstops.**

See Section IX, item 1.

**6. Zipair Tokyo Adds Service to San Jose, Vancouver.**

See Section IX, item 2.

**7. Etihad to Launch Service to Atlanta.**

See Section IX, item 3.