



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.

I. REGULATORY NEWS

1. Runway Excursion Accident In Miami Kills Five.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is investigating a September 6 cargo flight accident, in which a 21 Air Boeing 767-300, operating for Amazon Air, overran the end of a runway during landing at Miami International, crossed a public road, and hit two vehicles. Five passengers in the vehicles were killed. The two aircraft pilots were injured. NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy noted the absence of an Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS), which uses crushable material to stop an aircraft that overruns the runway end; the aircraft tires sink into the lightweight material, and the aircraft rapidly decelerates as it rolls through the EMAS bed. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) says EMAS is very effective in arresting aircraft overruns but has not required installation at all airports.

2. FAA Issues Washington D.C. Triumphal Arch Determination.

FAA said safety experts determined a 250-foot Triumphal Arch in Washington, D.C., proposed by President Trump to honor the 250th U.S. anniversary, would not pose a hazard to aircraft, after they reviewed airspace, air traffic patterns and procedures around Reagan Washington National Airport and operations at nearby military/public-use airports. The determination includes conditions for an “eternal flame on top and floodlight projectors pointed towards the arch to make it noticeable for pilots.” . . . The FAA determination, released on September 18, does not refer to a September 3 Interior Department announcement of the start of “excavation work necessary for the Great Triumphal Arch and Military Observation Deck.” Trump also has announced the arch will be a “top grade Military Complex,” housing drones, snipers and ammunition. . . . In a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford, Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) said FAA’s failure to address use of the arch as a “Military Complex” is “grounds to pause the project and complete a new aeronautical study,” adding that Trump’s claim of “national security” is a “transparent and absurd ploy to bypass necessary reviews, regulations and judicial oversight.” In her letter, Duckworth demanded that the Pentagon and FAA “reject this foolhardy plan and instead focus on increasing the safety of the airspace,” referring to their “joint failure” to implement recommendations made by NTSB after the January 2025 midair collision between a commercial jet and an Army helicopter near National that killed 67 people. Duckworth is ranking member of the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation.

3. Duffy Calls For Another \$30 Billion For ATC Modernization.

In remarks to the Aero Club of Washington, Sean Duffy, Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT), said air traffic control (ATC) modernization work needs another \$30 billion. Last year, Congress approved \$12.5 billion for the Brand New ATC System (BNATCS); the President's FY 2027 budget request is \$20 billion. Modern Skies Coalition, comprising about 60 industry groups, urged Congress to provide the additional resources needed.

4. FAA Deploys AI-Assisted Airspace Management Tool.

FAA is testing technology that “centralizes 200 data streams—including weather patterns, flight paths, traffic flow, and controller staffing metrics—into one platform.” The AI-supported engine of the Strategic Management of Airspace, Routes, and Trajectories (SMART) platform then “synthesizes the data to provide a comprehensive visualization of where planes are going, how much traffic the system can handle, and where congestion or weather could cause challenges.” SMART gives us the tools to cut flight delays, optimize traffic, and keep airspace capacity across the country open, said FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford. . . . “SMART cannot be used to replace the critical role air traffic controllers play or take over control of an aircraft,” said DOT Secretary Sean Duffy. “All of SMART’s recommendations are reviewed by FAA staff, and local leadership at air traffic control facilities can choose to accept or pass on these scheduling suggestions.” However, Don Beyer (D-VA), co-Chair of the bipartisan Congressional Artificial Intelligence (AI) Caucus, took issue with the deployment of SMART at Washington area airports. “FAA should not use my constituents as guinea pigs for an unproven AI air traffic control system...The Administration did shockingly little to educate the traveling public about this development before implementing it in one of the most complex airspaces in the world.” Beyer called on FAA “to immediately suspend [SMART] operation, at the very least until it is clearly established beyond doubt via air traffic controller feedback and independently verified stress testing that the technology is safe.” The National Air Traffic Controllers Association said it was not involved in design, testing, or implementation of SMART.

5. DOT Amends Rule On Reporting Causes Of Cancellations, Delays.

DOT is amending regulations governing how certificated air carriers report causes of flight cancellations and delays. The final rule, effective October 19, creates a new reporting category that “accurately reflects the statutory distinction between carrier-controllable events and the specific exclusions identified by Congress.”

6. DOT Closes Airline Privacy Review.

DOT closed its industry-wide privacy review of U.S. airlines, as it “has not identified any violation of applicable laws or departmental policies,” and reminded airlines “to safeguard passenger data, adhere to published privacy policies, and prevent unlawful discrimination in dynamic pricing practices.” . . . Separately, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) was asked by Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Congresswoman Shontel Brown (D-Ohio) to investigate “DOT’s systemic abdication of its consumer privacy enforcement mandates.”

7. Sully Sullenberger Inducted Into National Aviation Hall Of Fame.

Captain Sully Sullenberger has been inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame. Known for his role in “the Miracle on the Hudson,” when he and co-pilot Jeff Skiles safely landed an Airbus A320 on New York’s Hudson River in 2009 after a bird strike, Sullenberger has since been active in safety issues and training. He recently revealed a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s Disease and has become an advocate for early testing. “This is my last flight,” he said in an interview. “I’m going to go out using full afterburner.”

8. White House Withdraws ICAO Ambassador Nomination.

The White House withdrew Jeffrey Anderson’s nomination to represent the United States on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), with the rank of Ambassador. The post has been vacant since July 2022, when Sully Sullenberger stepped down after briefly serving.

9. Aviation Consumer Protection Advisory Committee Meets.

The four members of the Aviation Consumer Protection Advisory Committee (ACPAC) who represent consumers, airlines, airport operators and state and local governments held a two-day virtual public meeting in September with three agenda items: (1) a one-page document required by Section 429 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 that describes the rights of passengers regarding compensation for flight delays, diversions, cancellations, mishandled baggage, overbooking, and boarding denials, and further directs covered carriers to post the document prominently on their websites, (2) publicly available dashboards required by Section 506 of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act to keep consumers informed of policies and services provided by large U.S. air carriers, and (3) Know-Your-Rights posters required by Section 504 of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act that clearly and concisely outline the rights of passengers to be displayed prominently at airports with scheduled passenger service. Representatives of the same stakeholders made presentations and answered questions from the Committee. ACPAC

plans to reconvene at a later date to deliberate and decide on formal recommendations, if any, said DOT.

10. FAA To Create Unified Agency Safety Management System.

FAA intends to create a unified Safety Management System (SMS) across the agency and improve the “ability to proactively identify hazards and manage risk at the enterprise level.” The Aviation Safety Management Office (ASM) will lead the effort.

11. Fewer Laser Strikes on Aircraft Reported.

Pilots reported 4,470 laser strikes to FAA from January through July 2026, 24% fewer year-on-year, possibly due to education efforts. The strikes reached an all-time high of 13,304 in 2023. Pilots have reported 322 injuries since FAA began tracking reports in 2010. Penalties for shining lasers at aircraft include FAA fines of up to \$11,000 per violation, federal criminal penalties of up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, and state and local penalties. FAA noted that holiday laser-light displays can pose a safety risk when aimed into the sky; concentrated laser beams have the potential of distracting or temporarily blinding pilots.

II. AIRPORTS

1. FAA Invests \$1.1 Billion In Airport Infrastructure.

FAA announced a \$1.1 billion investment in airport infrastructure via 280 grants, which include \$43 million to 12 airports for noise mitigation projects, and \$10.9 million to equip 3,000 runway vehicles with transmitters (VMATs) at 61 airports. FAA delivered 191 grants worth \$481 million to airports, including \$100 million to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta for runway, taxiway and terminal reconstruction and runway safety area improvements; \$32.5 million to Louisville Muhammad Ali to reconstruct the terminal; and \$30.3 million to San Diego International for terminal construction. Another \$84.4 million went to airports in Texas, North Carolina, and Wyoming.

2. Flights In Northeast Grounded Amid Equipment Outages.

Philadelphia, New York LaGuardia and Kennedy, and Newark were among the Northeast airports that experienced ground stops on September 21, due to equipment outages at the Philadelphia Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON). In addition, an Amtrak construction crew accidentally cut into a fiber line in New Jersey causing a telecom outage. “The telecom lines have been repaired, and all airport operations in the Northeast are resuming,” reported DOT Secretary Sean Duffy that evening.

3. Transponders Installed In Ground Vehicles At New York Airports.

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said transponders have been installed in rescue and firefighting vehicles at LaGuardia and Kennedy, reports The New York Times. NTSB, in its preliminary investigation report, noted that a transponder on the fire truck that collided with an arriving Air Canada jet on March 22 would have constantly sent signals about its location to the control tower, which uses an automatic warning system. Port Authority, which also operates Newark Liberty and Teterboro, said it purchased all 34 of the transponders that were available, and ordered another 700.

4. ACI World Calls For Slot Modernization.

Airports Council International (ACI) World called for modernization of the global airport slot allocation system, in a white paper that details how a regulatory framework designed more than 50 years ago “is forcing the aviation industry into inefficient compromises, creating barriers to socio-economic competitiveness and connectivity.” The number of the world’s most congested, slot-restricted airports rose by over 25% in the last decade, and global passenger traffic is projected to nearly double by the mid-2040s, says the

white paper, “Airport Slot Policy–Rethinking Airport Access in a Capacity-Constrained World.” Fewer than 10% of the world’s airports handle nearly two-thirds of all passengers, and 85.5% of the busiest ones, those serving more than 40 million passengers a year, are already operating at or near full capacity. At the 50 most congested airports, the four largest airlines account for 67% of flights. Historic access rights accumulate over time and are rarely released, says ACI. There is little transparency as to how decisions about scarce capacity are actually made. “We strongly urge airline representatives and legacy industry bodies to move past historical resistance and a ‘zero-sum’ mentality and join us in improving the slot allocation system,” said Justin Erbacci, Director General of ACI World. “It is time to design a transparent, future-ready framework that unlocks operational efficiency, fosters healthy competition, and delivers the routes that the 21st-century global economy demands.”

5. JetBlue Purchase Of Spirit's 22 LaGuardia Slots Tentatively Approved.

FAA tentatively approved JetBlue's purchase of Spirit's 22 slots at New York LaGuardia, finding the proposed transaction “ensures that scarce public airspace resources are returned to active commercial service under a proven low-fare business model.” Use-or-lose requirements are waived through April 2027 in order for JetBlue to start up service at new markets or add service to existing markets. JetBlue is precluded from trading or leasing the slots to any carrier until after April 2028, and from outright sale of these slots in the future.

6. American To Anchor Phoenix New West Terminal.

Phoenix Sky Harbor selected American Airlines as the anchor tenant for the West Terminal, expected to open in 2033. The airport's first new terminal construction since Terminal 4 opened in 1990, West Terminal will be funded with passenger facility charges, bonds and airport funding; no local tax dollars will be used. American operates 40% of Sky Harbor traffic. . . . The Phoenix Aviation Department launched Destination PHX 2050, a development program for capital investments, including West Terminal. The airport anticipates 90 million passengers by 2050 and is also investing hundreds of millions of dollars in Terminal 4, which currently handles 75% of all passengers.

7. Chris Rocheleau Named President, CEO Of ACI-NA.

Airports Council International–North America (ACI-NA) named Chris Rocheleau President and CEO, effective October 5. He succeeds Kevin Burke, who is retiring after 13 years with ACI-NA. For more than two decades, Rocheleau held senior leadership positions at FAA, most recently as Acting Administrator and Deputy Administrator. He also served as Chief Operating Officer of National Business Aviation Association (NBAA).

8. **Nashville Begins Process Of Name Change To Honor Dolly Parton.**

The Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority voted unanimously to begin the process of modifying the airport's name to honor Dolly Parton, noting they "are working closely with the appropriate parties to thoughtfully determine how Dolly Parton's name and legacy will be incorporated."

9. **UK ATC Failure Causes 2,000 Flight Cancellations.**

NATS attributed a disruption in ATC services across Britain to a flight processing system failure, rather than a suspected cyberattack. More than 2,000 flights were canceled, the third recent major outage. UK Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the issue was not unavoidable and ordered the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to conduct a review and report back in six months. NATS is 49% owned by the government. Airlines UK CEO Tim Alderslade expressed concern about "a system where airlines pick up the bill for the mistakes of others, while the organizations responsible face little or no financial consequence." CAA said passengers are unlikely to be entitled to compensation from airlines for disruption considered the result of extraordinary circumstances.

III. **SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY**

1. **'Gateside By TSA PreCheck' Introduced.**

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) introduced Gateside by TSA PreCheck, which provides PreCheck members and those with Known Traveler Numbers with access to the terminal beyond airport security, even when they are not flying. The pilot program is available at 13 airports and will roll out to more airports across the country in coming months.

2. **ALPA Calls For Cockpit Secondary Barriers On In-Service Fleet.**

On the 25th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) called on FAA to move on rulemaking to retrofit in-service fleet cockpits with installed physical secondary barriers (IPSBs). They are required on new passenger aircraft, said ALPA officials, but “every plane already in service, already carrying passengers, is still allowed to fly without a secondary barrier. A quarter-century removed from September 11, that's a gap we shouldn't live with.”

3. **Cybersecurity Threats Concern Airport Executives.**

Cybersecurity threats to operational technology systems ranked first across all respondents to the ACI-NA “2026 AirportNEXT Futures Study: A Strategic Roadmap for the Next Generation of Airports.” Economic pressures and skilled labor shortages also dominated findings. The study evaluates 55 emerging trends with input from 320 airport executives in the United States and Canada.

4. **EU Entry/Exit System Exemption Continues For Some Countries.**

An exemption period for the European Union (EU) Entry/Exit System (EES) ended September 6, but several countries reportedly were able to delay full implementation until EES technical problems are resolved. Citing “excessive queues” and “avoidable disruption for passengers across Europe,” Ryanair asked the EU “to urgently extend the EES derogation until at least April 2027, giving airports and border authorities the time needed to fix the broken kiosks, increase staffing levels and ensure the system can operate efficiently.”

IV. ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY (AAM)

1. Joby Completes First Autonomous Transcontinental Flight.

Joby Aviation announced that a converted Cessna Caravan completed the first autonomous flight across the United States, flying 3,199 miles “with zero control inputs from its onboard safety pilot, concluding the eastbound leg of its month-long tour in North Carolina’s Outer Banks, near the site of the Wright brothers’ first powered flight.” The aircraft performed autonomous taxiing, takeoffs, route navigation, and landings under remote supervision from Joby’s Autonomy Headquarters in California and Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina, demonstrating operational capabilities across a range of environments, supporting applications in commercial freight, medical transport, disaster response, and defense logistics. By integrating an autonomous system onto an already-certified airframe, Joby offers a scalable path to autonomous air logistics, said Founder and CEO JoeBen Bevirt. During the cross-country journey, the aircraft was able “to seamlessly integrate into high-density environments like Phoenix Deer Valley, one of the nation’s busiest general aviation airports, while rerouting around severe weather and thunderstorms in real time without prior airport familiarity.”

2. Archer Launches 'No Roads' Flight Tour.

Archer Aviation launched its 'No Roads' flight tour, expanding its city-to-city flight test program for the all-electric Midnight air taxi across the United States in close coordination with FAA. The flights pave the way for Archer to conduct the White House's eVTOL [electric vertical takeoff and landing] Integration Pilot Program (eIPP) operations in Texas, Florida, and New York, “and begin flying Midnight in the Los Angeles area later this year, advancing Archer's readiness as the Official Air Taxi Provider of the LA28 Games.”

3. Consortium To Support Texas' Air Taxi Operations.

America's Consortium for Electric Skyways (ACES)—launched by Archer, BETA Technologies and Macquarie Capital—plans to support Texas' air taxi operations under the eIPP by expanding interoperable electric aviation charging infrastructure in the state across locations like airports, FBOs and other points of interest. Texas DOT and ACES aim to connect the “Texas Triangle” (Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston) and rural communities with air taxi networks expanding from each city to extend regional reach, said officials. ACES hopes to electrify up to 250 air taxi sites across America's largest airports and metro areas over the next decade. A shared infrastructure model where multiple operators and use cases run on the same

chargers will create “the pathway for additional infrastructure operators, OEMs and investors to join in on building a unified network rather than fragment into competing proprietary systems.”

4. North Carolina In Federal AAM Pilot Program.

Joby Aviation, BETA Technologies, and North Carolina DOT are testing regional flight and medical transport capabilities between small local airports and a major hub under DOT’s Advanced Air Mobility Integration Pilot Program. Joby’s remotely piloted J208 flew from Dare County Regional Airport to Raleigh-Durham International, while BETA’s electric ALIA aircraft completed multiple test flights between Raleigh Executive Jetport, Pitt-Greenville Airport and Dare County.

5. FAA Expands BEYOND Program For Drone Integration.

FAA launched Phase 2 of the Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) program, doubling its size with up to eight additional state, local, tribal, and territorial entities to serve as lead participants. Phase 2 will address public safety missions, on-airport drone activity, and operations beyond visual line of sight. The BEYOND program helps integrate drones and other emerging technologies into the national airspace system under established rules rather than waivers. Launched in 2020, the program succeeded the Integration Pilot Program. During Phase 1, participants logged 70,000 flights, including 48,000 BVLOS operations. FAA has proposed a rule for safely normalizing BVLOS drone operations; it includes requirements for operations, aircraft manufacturing, keeping drones safely separated from other aircraft, operational authorizations and responsibility, security, information reporting, and record keeping.

6. Remotely-Piloted Hybrid-Electric Flight Test For Cargo Shipments.

Elroy and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) conducted a hybrid-electric flight to test cargo deliveries at Houma-Terrebonne Airport in Louisiana. Elroy used its Chaparral aircraft, a highly automated hybrid eVTOL system designed to move heavy cargo by air between non-traditional sites. This was the first remotely piloted aircraft test flight under FAA’s eIPP.

7. Bye Awarded FAA Special Airworthiness Certificate For eFlyer 2.

FAA awarded Bye Aerospace a Special Airworthiness Certificate for eFlyer 2, a two-seater all-electric training aircraft. The company “is now focused on final aircraft inspections, operational readiness activities, and preparing to launch a phased flight test program,” said CEO Rod Zastrow. Bye has over 1,000 orders for eFlyer 2 and the four-seat eFlyer 4 from flight training schools.

8. Heart Unveils Purchase Agreement For Up To 100 Aircraft.

Los Angeles-based Heart Aerospace unveiled the ES-36, a 36-seat hybrid-electric regional airliner. The company also announced a deposit-backed purchase agreement for 50 ES-36 aircraft from air carrier JSX, with purchase rights for 50 more. Heart is backed by \$9 billion in customer commitments from carriers including United and Air Canada. Founded in 2016, JSX is a 'hop-on' public charter air carrier, serving 29 airports in the United States and Mexico with a fleet of 56 ERJ-family aircraft and four ATR 42-600s.

9. Electra Ultra Short Completes Flights At Commercial Airport.

Electra demonstrated capabilities of its fixed-wing Ultra Short aircraft to use vertical flight landing areas and helicopter-style instrument procedures at numerous Virginia airports. The hybrid-electric EL2 took off and landed at small heliports, vertiports, taxiways, and other novel Ultra Short access points historically only accessible by helicopters. "We showed that fixed-wing, Ultra Short aircraft can use vertical flight landing areas and a new generation of instrument procedures to reach places conventional airplanes were never designed to access," said CEO Marc Allen. "This will both bring air service closer to the passenger and also expand capacity at commercial airports in completely non-congestive ways." Electra's contracted customers include the U.S. Air Force, Army and Navy, and NASA; over 2,200 letters of intent from 60+ commercial customers include both airlines and helicopter operators.

V. **TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT**

1. **Ancillary Revenue Growth Matches Overall Airline Revenue.**

Ancillary revenue continues to outpace overall airline revenue, reports IdeaWorksCompany. Among the 58 airlines in its 2025 and 2026 Yearbooks, total ancillary revenue increased 13.4%, compared with a 7.2% increase in total revenue. Thirty airlines generated at least \$1 billion in ancillary revenue in 2025, up from 27 in 2024. Frontier Airlines led the world in ancillary revenue as share of total revenue, at 60.2%. Jet2.com generated \$100.73 per passenger, the highest result recorded in any prior Yearbook. United's total ancillary revenue in 2025 was \$11.5 billion, 9.3% higher than 2024. Southwest per passenger ancillary revenue rose nearly 20% to \$58.25 as it started charging fees for baggage and seat assignment midway through 2025. Frequent flyer programs for American, Delta, Southwest and United generated a combined \$27.9 billion in 2025, an average \$37.72 per passenger.

2. **U.S. Travel Agency Air Ticket Sales Break August Record.**

U.S.-based travel agency air ticket sales totaled a record \$9.8 billion in August, reports Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC), a 19% increase from August 2025, the previous highest recorded August total. Passenger trips reached 25.8 million in August 2026, a 5% year-over-year increase. Results are based on monthly sales data ending August 31, from 9,879 U.S. retail and corporate travel agency locations and online travel agencies. Results do not include sales of tickets purchased directly from airlines. Average ticket price is for a round-trip ticket settled through ARC for an itinerary that included only U.S. domestic travel.

3. **Study Finds Most Travelers Use AI To Plan Trips.**

Research conducted in April found that 54% of travelers use AI to plan travel and 75% intend to use AI for future trips. The Mindtrip, Sabre, Sojern, and MMGY Travel Intelligence study finds only 22% of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) currently offer AI trip-planning capabilities on their websites, and just 26% have a documented AI strategy. "We're witnessing the biggest shift in travel planning since online booking transformed the industry," said researchers. "Travelers now expect AI to guide them from inspiration through booking." The study surveyed 1,006 U.S. adults aged 18 and older who had taken an overnight leisure trip in the past 12 months or planned to do so in the next 12 months, and 103 DMO leaders and practitioners.

4. Uganda First African Carrier To Deploy Amadeus SkyWORKS.

Uganda Airlines is the first African carrier to deploy Amadeus SkyWORKS, a flight schedule solution that provides editing capabilities, real-time feasibility checking, and all capabilities required for schedule reporting and distribution. The flag carrier has also collaborated with Amadeus on revenue and loyalty management platform Altéa. . . . A recent Amadeus report, “The New Rules of Travel Protection,” finds 58% of global travelers view travel protection as essential for all trips. This rises to 70% among those who traveled internationally in the past 12 months. Some 61% say they are more likely to buy when coverage reflects the specific trip, such as weather cover for a ski holiday or illness protection for a tropical destination.

5. Virtuoso Identifies Luxury Travel Trends.

Virtuoso, a global network specializing in luxury and experiential travel, says it is on pace for a nearly 21% increase in year-over-year sales, following a strong 2025. Growth is broad-based, with every traveler-origin region up, led by Greater China at 34%, the UK and Ireland at 26%, the Middle East and Africa at 24%, Continental Europe at 23%, and the United States up 21%. Travelers are “choosing fall over summer, lingering longer and investing more to enjoy destinations at their best, without the crowds,” says Virtuoso, drawing from proprietary data and ongoing advisor and consumer surveys. They are stringing destinations together into longer, multicity itineraries, termed “city-maxxing,” and roughly one in two of these trips crosses an international border. Itineraries run on private aviation, and demand skews younger, with advisors reporting millennials leading private jet requests, 6% ahead of the global average. Virtuoso’s future leisure bookings for one and two years out are up 50%. As for artificial intelligence, Virtuoso advisors say because it draws on similar sources, much AI-generated travel content overlaps, producing repetitive rather than tailored itineraries and contributing to overcrowding at the destinations it recommends. Virtuoso’s July survey of nearly 800 advisors worldwide showed multigenerational and family travel led the type of trips clients are requesting.

VI. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Fuel Bill For Global Airline Industry.

The global average jet fuel price for week ending September 11 was \$181.46 per barrel, up +15.6% from prior month's average, and up +101.6% on prior year's average, according to the Jet Fuel Price Monitor, a joint IATA-Platts initiative.

2. United, Neste Extend SAF Agreement For U.S., Netherlands.

Neste and United Airlines extended their existing agreement for supply of Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel™ (SAF) blended with conventional jet fuel to flights departing Chicago O'Hare and Amsterdam Schiphol. Neste's SAF is made from renewable raw materials, such as used cooking oil and animal fat waste. SAF is certified for commercial use after blending up to 50% with conventional jet fuel and works seamlessly with existing aircraft engines and fueling infrastructure.

3. FedEx Expands SAF Agreements Across U.S. Air Network.

FedEx signed new purchasing agreements projected to secure more than 20 million gallons of neat SAF through 2027 at New York Newark and Kennedy, Oakland, Miami and Dallas Fort Worth airports. The agreements are expected to deliver SAF at blend ratios ranging from 30% to 50%, depending on location.

4. Expander Energy, Axens To Produce Drop-In Second-Generation SAF.

Expander Energy, a Canada-based producer of SAF and renewable diesel, selected Axens to provide its advanced FT Liquid Upgrading technology. Axens' technology will support production of drop-in, second-generation biofuels from cellulosic feedstock through Expander's patented Enhanced Biomass to Liquids (EBTL) and Biomass Electrolysis to Liquids (BETL) processes. The technology is expected to be deployed first at Expander's Wheatland Bio-Synfuels Facility, near Calgary, and Mackenzie Biomass Derived E-Fuels Facility, in northern British Columbia.

VII. U.S. CONGRESS

1. Congress Approves “Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2027.”

The House approved H.R. 6500, continuing appropriations and extensions legislation for Fiscal Year 2027, a stopgap measure that had been approved by the Senate earlier, averting a government shutdown on September 30 when previous funding was set to end; government-wide funding continues at fiscal year 2026 levels through December 11. . . . The House departed mid-September for a seven-week recess and will return in November, after mid-term elections; Senate recess begins October 1.

2. FAA Administrator Appears Before House Appropriations.

A public hearing on FAA’s Fiscal Year 2027 budget request was held by the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee. In his testimony, Administrator Bryan Bedford said FAA met or exceeded its accelerated transformation schedule for the first year of the Brand New Air Traffic Control System program with the \$12.5 billion already received, and an additional \$1.5 billion from the annual budget. The FY 2027 President’s budget request for another \$20 billion will allow the agency to maintain the rapid pace, address important programs, and start funding critical modernization work in automation systems, said Bedford, who warned, “Let me be clear, if we do not make this incremental, follow-on investment and fully complete this historic project, this will be a failure for the future of aviation.”

3. “DCA Air Safety Act” Introduced in Senate.

The “DCA Air Safety Act” was introduced in the Senate by Virginia Democrats Tim Kaine and Mark Warner to address “the constrained and complex airspace” around Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), responding to the January 2025 midair collision that claimed 67 lives. The bill would require FAA to cap DCA’s arrival rate at 28 aircraft per consecutive 60-minute period. It would reduce flight clustering, i.e., when takeoffs and landings are condensed into short, high-intensity windows, by requiring establishment of binding 30-minute interval caps within 180 days so operations are distributed evenly across each hour. It would eliminate 30 slots over five years to reduce overcrowding, including at least 26 beyond-perimeter exemptions (flights permitted to operate outside the airport’s 1,250-mile range limit). Eliminations would be phased in at a rate of six per year, starting in 2028, with full implementation required by the end of 2032. The legislation would require a public process from FAA, specifically publication of a proposed list of slots to

be eliminated, a 60-day public comment period, and publication of a final list within 120 days after close of public comment period. On the night of the January 2025 midair collision, there was an 18-minute period in which a single air traffic controller was responsible for managing 29 separate aircraft, including a five-minute span with six takeoffs or landings, “clear evidence of an airport pushed past its breaking point to the detriment of passenger safety.”

4. Senate Committee Approves Aviation Bills.

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee approved two bipartisan bills. The “Runway Surface Awareness and Focused, Effective Training and Technology (Runway SAFE-T) Act” (S. 5224) would establish an FAA airport-driver-training task force and allow use of federal funding for movement area technology, including situational-awareness systems, and technology-enabled driver-training systems and services. The “Air Traffic Situational Awareness Enhancement Act” (S. 3929) would require FAA to acquire, install, and operate the Airborne Position Reference Tool (APRT), which uses ADS-B data to present controllers with a real-time display of local airspace.

5. House Committee Approves Aviation Bills.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved several bills. The “Quiet Skies Act” (H.R. 9530) requires that DOT issue a final rule prohibiting passengers on commercial flights from making calls on cell phones or other electronic devices during scheduled passenger flights. . . . The “Drone Safety Statement Modernization Act of 2026” (H.R. 10304) directs FAA to develop and maintain a statement outlining laws, airspace restrictions, and other requirements applicable to small, unmanned aircraft system operations (sUAS). It requires manufacturers to provide the statement upon initial activation of a new sUAS and operators to acknowledge reviewing and understanding the information before first use. . . . The “Rural Airport Infrastructure Support Act of 2026” (H.R. 6448) ensures consistency in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) cost share requirements for economically distressed communities. The bill reduces the local match for AIP projects from 10% to 5% for economically distressed communities that were previously eligible for Essential Air Service (EAS) and have since lost EAS service. The bill does not change AIP funding levels or expand the EAS program. . . . The “Aviation Medication Transparency Act of 2026” (H.R. 2592) requires FAA to publicly list medications that pilots, flight instructors, flight attendants, and other aviation professionals can safely use, and medications they should not use while flying. It also requires that FAA provide information on how long airmen may need to limit duties while adjusting to certain medications. . . . The “Air Traffic Situational Awareness Enhancement Act” (H.R. 8597) directs FAA

to acquire and install in Federal Contract Towers approved tools that provide controllers better situational awareness. It also provides reimbursement for contract towers that have already purchased such equipment. . . . The “Aviation Innovation and Global Competitiveness Act” (H.R. 7553) requires that FAA establish clearer timelines and procedures for the aircraft type certification process for advanced air mobility aircraft.

6. Senate Passes Medical-Related Bills.

The “John A. Hauser Mental Health in Aviation Act” was approved by the Senate. Named in honor of an aviation student who took his own life, the bill updates FAA’s medical certification process so pilots and air traffic controllers can seek mental health care without risking their careers. . . . Concurrently, the Senate passed the “Aviation Medication Transparency Act,” which requires FAA to issue accessible, user-friendly guidance on medications that are safe for individuals in positions requiring an FAA Medical Certificate, including pilots, air traffic controllers and other aviation professionals. FAA currently provides Aviation Medical Examiners with specific guidance, but this information is not easily accessible to aviation professionals. . . . “These two bipartisan, commonsense bills will help make it easier for those in our aviation workforce to take care of themselves without fearing for their job security,” said bill sponsors John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.). “Now that they’ve passed the Senate with unanimous consent, the House must do the same so we can address bureaucratic shortcomings within the FAA, dismantle the dangerous culture of silence surrounding mental health in the aviation industry and ultimately make our skies safer.”

VIII. BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS

1. Chinese President Xi Visits U.S., Calls For Increased Direct Flights.

During a state visit to the United States, Chinese President Xi Jinping said a potential area for strengthened cooperation is “an increase in direct flights to facilitate two-way travel and trade.” . . . U.S. airlines oppose such flights, said Airlines for America CEO Chris Sununu, citing an imbalance caused by Russian airspace restrictions that do not apply to Chinese airlines, allowing them shorter, more economical routings on flights between China and the United States.

2. Treasury Seeks To Ground Iranian Airlines With New Sanctions.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned 27 Iranian airlines, “which the regime uses to move weapons, personnel, and illicit cargo. The action also targeted covert front companies, foreign intermediaries, and deceptive transshipment routes that Iran relies on to obtain U.S.-origin aircraft and sensitive technology.” In addition, Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued an alert asking financial institutions to report procurement networks supporting Iran’s aviation industry. . . . Mahan Air recently received at least three Boeing B-777 aircraft that were diverted through the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, said OFAC. UAE-based ECT Aviation Support and Türkiye-based Sky Phoenix served as intermediaries in the scheme. Each aircraft originated from a retired fleet before passing through ECT Aviation Support UAE, where they received temporary registrations. The transfer route closely mirrored previous sanctions evasion operations for Mahan Air.

IX. EUROPE AND AFRICA

1. Delta Adds Detroit-Athens, Boston-Venice Nonstops.

Delta will offer nonstop Airbus A330 service three-times-weekly between Detroit and Athens, June 8 through October 28; and four-times-weekly between Boston and Venice, May 7 through October 29. Previously announced daily A330-900neo flights from Austin to Paris, launching March 27, will be Austin's first nonstop service to Paris "and will give customers one-stop access to nearly 70 destinations across Europe, India and Africa through Delta's partnership with Air France-KLM."

2. Southwest, LOT Polish Airlines Begin Partnership.

LOT Polish Airlines is Southwest's eleventh interline partner. From Warsaw Chopin Airport, LOT connects Central and Eastern Europe with destinations worldwide, including Boeing 787 Dreamliner flights to India, Japan and South Korea. LOT and Southwest both serve Los Angeles, Miami and San Francisco.

3. KLM Returns To Minneapolis.

For the winter season, from October 25 to March 27, KLM will fly to San Diego for the first time and will resume flights to Minneapolis. The arrival of its first Airbus A350 at Schiphol will soon mark an important step in continued fleet renewal, said KLM. As the Airbus A330 is phased out, flights to Miami will be operated mainly by Boeing aircraft this winter. The A350's first commercial passenger flight will be to Toronto. KLM continues to adjust operations to reduce night-time noise. Wherever possible, latest-generation aircraft will be used and the number of landings between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. will be reduced. As a result, passengers on some routes may encounter a different aircraft type or an adjusted departure time.

4. Norse Cancels New York Routes.

Norse Atlantic Airways canceled planned Boeing 787-9 winter service from New York Kennedy to London Gatwick and Rome Fiumicino. "As fuel prices remain elevated, we remain mindful of our capacity allocation in the coming months in line with our flexible fleet deployment strategy," said CEO Eivind Roald. In July, IndiGo announced it would discontinue its damp lease agreement for six B-787-9 aircraft with Norse Atlantic effective October 31.

5. airBaltic Initiates Chapter 11 Financial Reorganization.

airBaltic initiated Chapter 11 proceedings in U.S. Bankruptcy Court and secured a commitment for €350 million in new debtor-in-possession financing. “Our focus is on continuing to run the airline while implementing the changes set out in our new business plan,” said President and CEO Erno Hildén; “operations continue as normal.” The company expects to complete the Chapter 11 process by June 2027. airBaltic is owned by the Latvian government (88.37%), Lufthansa (10%) and private shareholders (1.63%). . . . Ryanair unveiled a US\$1.6 billion investment proposal, offering to double traffic in the Baltic States, “which could deliver 11 million annual seats, 16 based aircraft, and thousands of new jobs...Instead of wasting more taxpayer money on zombie airBaltic, Baltic Governments must now abolish aviation taxes and reduce excessive airport charges and compete for Ryanair’s [investment]. Lower access costs deliver more aircraft, more routes, lower fares, more tourism and more jobs, without taxpayers having to fund a cent.”

6. Boeing: Africa’s Airplane Fleet Will More Than Double By 2045.

“Africa’s aviation market is entering a period of sustained growth driven by improving connectivity, expanding intraregional travel and deeper economic ties across the continent and with key global markets,” said Boeing, with the release of its ‘2026 Commercial Market Outlook for Africa.’ Passenger traffic is expected to grow nearly 6% annually through 2045, one of the fastest rates globally, with the region’s commercial airplane fleet more than doubling from 755 to 1,625 to support this demand. Of nearly 1,200 newly delivered airplanes, 870 will be single-aisle to support expanding domestic and regional networks. Intra-Africa and Africa–Middle East traffic will lead regional fleet growth and network expansion. Europe will remain the largest international passenger market for flights to and from Africa. Demand for widebody airplanes will more than double, supporting fleet modernization and long-haul network growth. The cargo fleet will grow from 60 to 150 freighters as the continent’s logistics, e-commerce and high-value export markets develop. Boeing forecasts a need for 75,000 new aviation professionals: 22,000 pilots, 25,000 technicians and 28,000 cabin crew.

X. ASIA/PACIFIC AND MIDDLE EAST

1. American, Starlux Launch Codeshare Partnership.

American Airlines and Taiwan-based Starlux launched a partnership under which American will place its code on Starlux-operated flights to Taipei Taoyuan International from Los Angeles, Ontario, San Francisco, Seattle, and, pending regulatory approvals, from Phoenix Sky Harbor.

2. ANA Group Consolidates Cargo Airlines.

ANA Holdings is integrating ANA Cargo Inc., Nippon Cargo Airlines Co., Ltd., and NCA Japan Co., Ltd. into one airline on April 1, 2027. ANA Nippon Cargo Airlines Co., Ltd will operate under the brand name ANA Nippon Cargo, with its own fleet and “direct responsibility for safety and service quality.”

3. Korean Air Finalizes Purchase Agreement For 103 Boeing Aircraft.

Korean Air finalized a \$44.8 billion agreement to acquire next-generation aircraft and engines. The contract includes \$36.2 billion for 103 Boeing aircraft, including 20 B777-9s, 25 B787-10s, 50 B737-10s, and eight B777-8F freighters. The airline also finalized agreements totaling \$8.6 billion with GE Aerospace and CFM International for 21 spare engines and a 15-year engine maintenance contract for 28 aircraft. . . . Korean Air will transition Asiana Airlines bookings and flight numbers from November 2 to December 3, ahead of the integrated airline’s official launch on December 17.

4. Air Arabia Begins Operations From King Fahd.

Air Arabia began operations from King Fahd International, following receipt of its Air Operating Certificate (AOC) from the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation, initially serving Riyadh, Jeddah, and Medinah. The airline operates Airbus A320s. Group CEO is Adel Al Ali. . . . Dammam Airports signed a contract to develop King Fahd, located in the Saudi Eastern Region. The project includes designing the expansion of passenger terminals, upgrading facilities, and improving airport entrances and access roads. It also includes developing baggage handling systems, digital services, and terminal wayfinding systems. The master plan forecasts 19.3 million passengers annually by 2030 and cargo capacity to 600,000 tons.

XI. AMERICAS

1. Regional Airline Association Releases 2026 Annual Report.

Regional airlines operate 34.2% of U.S. scheduled passenger flights and provide the only scheduled air service to 64% of the nation's airports, according to the 2026 Annual Report released by Regional Airline Association (RAA). Regionals served 637 airports in 2025, representing 93.7% of U.S. airports with scheduled passenger service, and carried nearly 143 million passengers, said RAA President and CEO Faye Malarkey Black. Departures increased 8.2%. Air service at communities participating in the Essential Air Service program supported more than 17,800 jobs. Dedicated air courier service at small-community airports "provide the last mile of the air cargo network, carrying replacement parts, lab samples, refrigerated medicine, and packages people and businesses depend on."

2. American Unveils Premium-Configured Boeing 777-300ER.

American Airlines launched its first retrofitted Boeing 777-300ER, featuring 70 Flagship Suite® seats with privacy doors, more personal storage space, and a chaise lounge seating position; 44 Premium Economy seats, redesigned with sculpted headrests, adjustable calf and foot rests, and enhanced storage; and 30 extra legroom seats in Main Cabin Extra. The 20 aircraft operate on London, Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Sydney routes.

3. Alaska Airlines Expanding Paine Field Service.

Alaska Airlines is expanding service at Seattle/Everett (Paine Field). New West Coast flights include twice daily service to San Jose Mineta, Los Angeles and Portland, and more seats to San Diego and San Francisco.

4. Southwest Plans Airport Lounge Network.

Southwest is partnering with Chase to create an airport lounge network. Construction has begun at Austin-Bergstrom, Baltimore/Washington, Honolulu, and Nashville, with opening expected in late 2027.

5. JetBlue Unveils 'BlueFirst.'

JetBlue unveiled details of 'BlueFirst,' a new domestic first-class experience to be available in all markets not currently served with Mint service. The product features advanced seatback technology with seatback ordering, and premium amenities. . . . Carl Icahn reduced his JetBlue position to around 3.32%, from the over 10% original position, and two board members departed; terms of the agreement with Icahn Enterprises require a minimum beneficial ownership of

the company's outstanding shares to maintain representation. "We appreciate the constructive partnership with JetBlue," said Icahn, "as they have reshaped the airline and we look forward to seeing them continue to successfully execute the JetForward strategy."

6. Frontier Adds Service To Colombia From Orlando.

Frontier will begin service to South America in December, with flights from Orlando to Bogotá, Cartagena and Medellín. . . . 'Cancel for Any Reason' is the latest addition to Frontier's suite of flexibility options powered by HTS (Hopper Technology Solutions), enabling consumers to cancel up to 24 hours prior to departure and receive a refund; customers select the level of refundability that best fits their needs during booking. The launch builds on Frontier's 'Disruption Assistance for Any Reason' product, which provides travelers with real-time options when unexpected disruptions occur.

7. Spirit Wins Approval To Sell 27 Aircraft.

Spirit Airlines won bankruptcy court approval to sell 27 Airbus aircraft. Four will be sold to FTAI Aircraft Leasing for \$100.7 million cash, and 23 to creditors for \$567.4 million. . . . Separately, FTAI announced the acquisition of 27 Boeing 737-700 aircraft from Canadian airline WestJet.

8. ALPA Supports Sun Country Pilots.

Sun Country pilots received a \$2 million allocation from Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), "to provide additional resources for ongoing contract negotiations and joint collective bargaining agreement negotiations that will follow as part of the merger with Allegiant Air." ALPA said it is optimistic about collaboratively solving problems "but the bottom line is that our pilots don't want to see cuts to Minnesota service."

9. Breeze Pilots Request Federal Mediator.

Breeze Airways pilots, represented by ALPA, asked the National Mediation Board (NMB) to appoint a federal mediator to assist in negotiations for their first collective bargaining agreement. After nearly four years in negotiations, "only a small fraction of contract sections has reached tentative agreements, with only two sections being tentatively agreed upon since January 2025," said ALPA, which, in January 2026, filed a federal lawsuit against Breeze alleging "bad faith bargaining and interference with pilots' rights to effective union representation. That litigation remains ongoing." Breeze, founded in 2021 by David Neeleman, operates 300 year-round and seasonal nonstop routes between 90 cities in 30 states, with a fleet of Airbus A220-300s.

10. **Delta Adds Detroit-Athens, Boston-Venice Nonstops.**
See Section IX, item 1.
11. **Southwest, LOT Polish Airlines Begin Partnership.**
See Section IX, item 2.
12. **KLM Returns To Minneapolis.**
See Section IX, item 3.
13. **Norse Cancels New York Routes.**
See Section IX, item 4.
14. **American, Starlux Launch Codeshare Partnership.**
See Section X, item 1.