



July 16, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem S. Jeffries
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
2049 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Katherine Clark
2368 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Leader Scalise, Leader Jeffries, and Whip Clark,

This week, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to consider legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This is a critically important piece of legislation that invests in airports, transportation infrastructure, addresses shortages of air traffic controllers, safety technology on runways, and other provisions necessary for safe, convenient air travel.

However, we are concerned that bipartisan efforts to pass this critical legislation are being derailed by an effort to change Reagan National Airport's (DCA) slot and perimeter rules. As the FAA and the local airport authority, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), have made clear, DCA currently operates at capacity and is in danger of being overburdened by additional flights. The airport, significantly constrained by a lack of ground and air space and its proximity to federal and military installations, is delay prone¹, has the busiest runway in America², ranks third in non-carrier caused cancellations³, and tenth among the most delayed airports⁴.

In fact, the FAA's analysis found that already about 20 percent of departures and 22 percent of arrivals at DCA experience average delays of 67 minutes. An increase of 20 round trip operations would increase delays at DCA by 25.9 percent, while an increase of 25 round trip operations would increase delays by 33.2 percent. Further, the FAA analysis stated that a justification being cited to add more flights at DCA was "flawed and does not directly tie to the physical airport capacity."⁵

Given these clear facts, the analysis of numerous experts, and opposition to changing the slot and perimeter rules by numerous local officials and local airport authorities, Congress should not be considering legislation that would add more flights to DCA knowing that the outcome would be more delays, cancellations, congestion, and a worse customer experience at airports. Continued debate on this matter will further delay passage of the FAA Reauthorization that is needed for safe, reliable, and resilient air travel.

¹ Federal Aviation Administration, *DCA Air Service Analysis*, May 25, 2023

² MWAA, *"Reagan National's Runway is Busiest in America"*, May 30, 2023.

³ U.S. DOT Reporting Carrier On-Time Performance database, 2022.

⁴ Op.cit., *FAA DCA Air Service Analysis*.

⁵ Ibid.

As chief executives of the nation's leading airlines, we remain strongly opposed to changes to the slot and perimeter rules at DCA, as it would not only lead to mass delays and cancellations for customers, but also threaten timely passage of the FAA Reauthorization bill.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ben Minicucci
CEO, Alaska Airlines



Robert Isom
CEO, American Airlines



Scott Kirby
CEO, United Airlines

cc:

The Honorable Sam Graves
The Honorable Rick Larsen