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SACRAMENTO, CA WASHINGTON, D.C.

TRANSPORTATION

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NONSTOP AIR SERVICE FROM SACRAMENTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO WASHINGTON-REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT

Requested Action:

In an FAA Reauthorization year that has primarily focused on the customer experience, Congress should convert 10 percent of the underutilized "other" slot pairs at DCA to allocate flying beyond DCA's perimeter to non-large hub airports in the United States – including SMF.

- 93.3 percent or 73,570 of DCA's "other" slots went unused in 2022¹. Reallocating 10 percent of these underused slots for non-large hub airports would connect some of the country's fastest-growing regions and airports, several of which serve state capitals or large military facilities, to government headquarters surrounding DCA.

This approach keeps all current commercial air services intact both inside and outside the perimeter and would not cause an increase in noise or delays over previously approved levels.

Business Nexus

Sacramento International Airport (SMF) serves as the primary commercial service airport for seven counties – Sacramento, El Dorado, Sutter, Yuba, San Joaquin, Placer, and Yolo – and provides 176 daily nonstop flights to 41 destinations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.² Although SMF connects to nearly every major U.S. city, the region lacks a nonstop flight to the closest airport to the nation's capital: Washington-Reagan National Airport (DCA).

FAA Reauthorization generates an opportunity for Congress to evaluate and improve air service while providing more equitable access to DCA and modernizing the approach to DCA's slot exemptions for beyond-perimeter

¹ FAA's OpsNet Database, CY2022 reporting

² Airline Data Inc, selected date of July 19, 2024

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airports to meet passenger demand better: starting with our nation's fastest-growing regions and airports — like Sacramento and SMF — whose metropolitan areas remain unserved.

Background

Since 2000, there has been a push by Congressional delegations, airports, and community and consumer groups to permit flying to and from DCA. Exemptions to the 1,250-mile limit were granted in 2000, 2003 and 2012. However, many airports that serve state capitals or have a large military presence with high demand for business travel to government headquarters surrounding DCA continue to lack nonstop service.

Of the airports that fall outside the perimeter, only nine of the contiguous United States' Top 80 Airports for passenger travel are without nonstop service to DCA. SMF is the 3rd largest, with 265 passengers traveling per day. A listing of the Top 5 Airports without nonstop service to DCA can be found below:

Market	Air Miles to DCA	CY2022 Passengers ³	Passengers Per Day ⁴
San Diego (SAN)	2,273	596,322	817
San Antonio (SAT)	1,386	358,177	491
Sacramento (SMF)*	2,375	193,360	265
Albuquerque (ABQ)*	1,654	164,190	225
Orange County (SNA)	2,290	123,506	169

**State Capitals*

By converting 10% of the underutilized "other" slot pairs at DCA to allocate flying beyond DCA's perimeter to non-large hub airports in the United States, Congress would satisfy all of the Transportation Department's criteria used in the 2012 'For Beyond the Perimeter Flying Considerations' report, including:

- 1) **Flights are beneficial for connecting communities beyond the 1,250-mile perimeter** – Not only will nonstop service to DCA for the communities listed above meet strong travel demand between the two destinations, but it would open up one-stop connectivity options up and down the East Coast.
- 2) **Flights don't reduce travel options within the perimeter** – No slots would need to be reallocated from existing commercial service markets, preserving access for those communities already served nonstop.
- 3) **Flights don't increase travel delays at DCA** – Reallocating existing slots will not increase congestion beyond planned levels approved by Congress in previous exemptions.

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Origin & Destination Survey, CY 2022

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, Origin & Destination Survey, CY 2022

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- 4) **Flights increase airline competition in multiple markets** – Additional options will increase competition in many of the above markets, ultimately decreasing fares for passengers.