MYTH vs. FACT:
Debunking Myths About DCA's Slot and Perimeter Rules

MYTH #1: Changing the existing slot and perimeter rules at DCA will make Washington more accessible.[1]

FACTS:

- Washington, D.C. already enjoys world-class access to destinations around the U.S. and across the globe through three major airports that are accessible by public transit: DCA, IAD, and BWI.[2]

- DCA is at capacity and already has the 3rd worst cancellation rate, trailing only LaGuardia and Newark.[3]

- Changes to the slot and perimeter rules will incentivize airlines to reduce short-haul service for more profitable long-haul service,[4] threatening access for cities inside the perimeter and smaller communities that connect to, or through, Washington.[5]

MYTH #2: DCA can easily add an additional 28 take-offs and landings per day.[6]

FACTS:

- DCA's 58 gates are already jammed throughout the day, often meeting the industry maximum.[7]

- DCA is at capacity, with no room to grow, and cannot accommodate more flights due to geographic limitations and airside capacity.[8]

- An additional 28 flights per day would add nearly 9,000 passengers per day to DCA – or 3.3 million additional passengers per year.[9]

- If the proposed changes become law, DCA would be forced to handle 12.6 million passengers beyond what it was designed to handle, without any regard for the impact on passenger safety or convenience, and the physical constraints of the airport itself.[10]

- DCA is one of only 3 airports in the country where the FAA has capped flights to directly manage congestion, and it operates today at the maximum allowed under this cap.[11]

- Additional flights would increase flight delays, lower opportunities to recover operations in the event of delays, and result in planes burning more fuel from longer taxi times.[12]

- Increasing flights from larger planes that carry even more passengers will further crowd terminals, gates, boarding areas, and baggage systems.[13]

- DCA's recent renovation focused on overdue gate, terminal and security improvements. It did not add any capacity to handle additional flights.[14]

MYTH #3: Increasing the number of flights allowed at DCA will strengthen the economy and increase jobs.[15]

FACTS:

- Adding flights will lead to more noise, delays, congestion, and reduction of service to cities around the country.[16]

- For every flight added outside of the perimeter, an in-perimeter flight is at risk, especially those to smaller communities that depend on that connection for their own local economies.[17]

- Recent investments near IAD including the Silver Line Metrorail station and the announcement of a new state-of-the-art concourse, as well as the long-term employment created in airport concessions and aircraft and passenger services, will be at risk if these changes are made.[18]

MYTH #4: Changes to the rules will improve productivity and make air travel faster and more efficient.[19]

FACTS:

- DCA is facing a 27% shortage of certified air traffic controllers below its FAA target number. Additional flights will further increase the burden on air traffic controllers.[20]

- Already, about 20% of departures and 22% of arrivals at DCA experience average delays of 67 minutes. The addition of 20 daily round-trip operations would increase delays by 25.9%, and the addition of 25 daily round-trip operations would increase delays by 33.2%.[21]

- Adding more passengers and flights to DCA will increase strain on the airport's systems.[22]

ENDNOTES

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[10] CPARA analysis.

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[21] DCA Air Service Analysis Memo, p. 2, *Federal Aviation Administration*, May 25, 2023

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