Community and Industry Leaders Launch Coalition to Protect America's Regional Airports

Coalition Represents a Nationwide Effort to Support the Critical Economic Contributions of Regional Airports and Ensure Their Continued Access to Our Nation's Capital Region

(WASHINGTON D.C., MAY 31, 2023) - Today, airports, chambers of commerce, businesses, and community organizations around the country joined together to form the Coalition to Protect America's Regional Airports (CPARA), a nationwide coalition working to protect regional airports and the critical role they play in connecting communities, creating jobs, and supporting local economies. CPARA strongly opposes any changes to Reagan National Airport's (DCA) High Density ("slot") and perimeter rules.

CPARA believes that airport authorities – working with local communities and lawmakers – are best suited to make operational decisions at airports, which will lead to safer, more convenient, and sustainable air travel.

"If the slot and perimeter rules are removed or changed, airlines will be incentivized to replace routes that promote and sustain nationwide connectivity with longer-haul, more profitable flights. These lost connections will have a significant impact on the local communities that rely on regional airports for economic development as well as safe and convenient travel. However, not only will this have a negative impact on regional airports, but these proposed changes will have a profound negative effect on both Reagan National Airport and the surrounding community. Congress should instead be focused on passing the FAA Reauthorization bill, which is desperately needed by the entire aviation industry and the traveling public, who are using the nation's aviation system at historic levels." – Scott K. York, a Coalition director and Executive Director of the Committee for Dulles.

Changing the slot and perimeter rules would have a demonstrable, disproportionate, and disruptive economic impact on regional airports within the perimeter, as well as the communities and businesses that rely on them. Every additional exemption beyond the perimeter threatens access to both DCA and Dulles International Airport (IAD) for smaller in-perimeter cities and communities that connect to, or through, Washington.

Moreover, DCA is currently at capacity and at risk of being seriously overburdened should there be changes to the slot and perimeter rules. A CNN report has indicated that DCA already has the 3rd worst cancellation rate among the 30 busiest airports in the U.S., while an analysis by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) found that about 20% of departures and 22% of arrivals at DCA already experience average delays of 67 minutes. The FAA estimates that the addition of 20 daily round-trip operations would increase these delays by 25.9%, and an increase of 25 daily round trip operations would increase these delays by 33.2%.

"DCA's slot and perimeter rules were carefully designed to promote safety, ease airport congestion, and reduce traffic around the geographically constrained airport. The nation's Capital Region is served by three airports that work in tandem." – Jack Potter, President and CEO, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA).

A [CPARA analysis](#) of the proposed changes demonstrate that they would irresponsibly add more than 9,000 passengers per day to DCA over the objections of MWAA even though the airport is already at capacity, further straining the terminals, gates, parking lots, roads, and nearby streets and highways. If these changes became law, the airport 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. Moreover, these additional passengers would have to be accommodated at an airport that literally has nowhere to grow, given the geographic constraints of its location, and at an airport with some of the shortest runways in the country, which are not equipped to handle larger aircraft.

Congress should be focused on fixing the pilot and air traffic controller shortages, supporting an industry still recovering from the pandemic, and promoting safety and security – not jeopardizing regional communities across America. To learn more and to contact your member of Congress, please visit www.protectregionalairports.com.

About The Coalition to Protect America's Regional Airports

The Coalition to Protect America's Regional Airports (CPARA) strongly believes that airport authorities – working with local communities and lawmakers – are best placed to make operational decisions at our airports, which will lead to safer, more convenient, and sustainable air travel.

We oppose any changes to the High Density ("slot") and perimeter rules at Reagan National Airport (DCA). DCA is currently at capacity and at risk of being seriously overburdened should there be changes to the slot and perimeter rules. Adding more flights from DCA could create unnecessary gridlock, threaten jobs and local businesses, risk connectivity for countless communities, and increase congestion, delays, and noise.