Capital Access Alliance
MYTH VS. FACT

Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) is the only airport in the country subject to a federally imposed perimeter rule, which was established by Congress in 1966, and federal constraints on the number of allowed flights. Currently, only seven airlines are authorized to operate just 20 daily roundtrips to 10 beyond-perimeter destinations – less than six percent of daily scheduled flights from DCA. Congress has the ability to authorize additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights at DCA when they take up the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill this fall to increase affordable access to America's capital region.

Capital Access Alliance (CAA) released an extensive, 100-page study, which shows that the current perimeter rule no longer serves its original purpose and outlines how Washington, D.C., metropolitan communities and consumers around the country could benefit from additional flights at DCA, a currently underutilized airport.

MYTH: Authorizing additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights at DCA would hurt growth at Dulles International Airport (IAD).

FACT: Adding 28 additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights at DCA would have no negative impact on IAD's future growth, as Northern Virginia's population has more than tripled since the 1970s, and IAD has firmly cemented itself as one of the top airports in the Washington, D.C.-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) region. The extensive study found (p.9) that "over the past several years, IAD has seen significant passenger growth, even when exceptions to the perimeter rule were granted at DCA."

MYTH: DCA is not equipped to handle increased passenger volume, and authorizing more flights would just add more congestion.

FACT: DCA is underutilized compared to other airports in the top 10 U.S. metros (p. 51) and therefore capable of serving more passengers. The study found (p.18) that DCA has seen "significant infrastructure and operational changes, greatly increasing its ability to handle higher passenger volumes." In fact, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) has repeatedly touted that DCA's $1 billion terminal expansion, "Project Journey," will address congestion and increase comfort and convenience. The new terminal expansion includes 50,000 square feet at each checkpoint, along with a new 14 -gate concourse. A U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) administrator said that the expansion would allow a 40 percent increase in capacity for security lines.

MYTH: The communities surrounding DCA would face more noise and disruption if additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights are granted.

FACT: Today's aircraft are faster, more efficient and quieter than ever before (p. 47). In fact, research of DCA aircraft operations found that the average noise levels have remained flat over the

past 10 years. This results from an evolution of aircraft technology and the shift of mixed aircraft towards equipment that meets the newer and more stringent noise standard requirements.

Additionally, the report notes studies that show engine and mainframe technological advances will make aircraft across the board quieter. Committee on Aviation Environment Protection (CAEP) experts estimate that by 2030, narrow-body and regional jets for newly certified aircraft would be 8 to 10 EPNdB quieter than an aircraft certified in 2020.

MYTH: DCA's current capacity is sufficient for the Washington, D.C. region.

FACT: Adding 28 additional daily flights to DCA will better meet the demand for increased access to Washington, D.C., as more people than ever are counting on increased access to the capital region. Beyond-perimeter markets have seen tremendous economic and population growth. As the study notes (p.8), beyond-perimeter markets are now home to 28 percent of Fortune 500 companies – doubling from 14 percent in 1966 – while 20 are located in the DMV. Employers and their employees, as well as residents in in- and beyond-perimeter markets will require more access to lawmakers, regulators and the rich history in our nation's capital.

MYTH: Airlines will abandon smaller markets in favor of larger ones if more beyond-perimeter flights are added at DCA.

FACT: Adding more flights doesn't mean reassigning or taking away existing flights. As previously noted, DCA is an underutilized airport. Smaller or in-perimeter markets would still be served, while additional beyond-perimeter flights would help meet current demand. What's more, the study found that markets not impacted by the perimeter rule have higher direct connectivity rates and provide higher levels of in-perimeter access.

The study also notes (p.17), air service from Washington, D.C., is currently concentrated in fewer airports. Two or more daily roundtrip flights serve only 52 percent of the top similarly sized in-perimeter markets. Consistent with direct connectivity rate analysis findings, metropolitan areas not impacted by the perimeter rule provide more frequent direct access to their top similarly sized in-perimeter markets.

MYTH: Additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights would negatively affect DCA's air service reliability.

FACT: Adding 28 in- and beyond-perimeter flights will improve, not harm, DCA's air service reliability. The perimeter rule has incentivized carriers to fly more regional aircraft, which on average, experience a higher rate of disruption. As the study outlines (p.34), DCA has 25 percent more cancellations than similar metros.

MYTH: Congress would be meddling in the operations of a local airport by adding additional in- and beyond-perimeter flights at DCA.

FACT: Claiming that Congress should not be involved in dictating operations at DCA is actually an argument against maintaining the perimeter rule, not for it. The perimeter rule is a federal regulation established by Congress in 1966 when jet aircraft began operating at DCA. It was Congress that expanded DCA's non-stop service to 1,250 statute miles in the mid-1980s. In fact, the MWAA itself was created with the consent of Congress. As DCA's own website notes, "Congress must

propose and approve federal legislation to allow the U.S. Department of Transportation" to modify the perimeter rule."

In other words, Congress has been involved with operations at DCA for nearly 60 years precisely because it is a federally owned facility.

MYTH: Adding 28 more flights is a substantial increase. There isn't enough room at DCA for such a large expansion.

FACT: DCA has 437 daily departures, only 20 of which are roundtrips to beyond-perimeter destinations – less than six percent of total daily flights. Adding 28 more flights would bring the daily beyond-perimeter total to less than 10 percent.

MYTH: DCA can't accommodate more flights, which is illustrated by the fact that the FAA has asked airlines to reduce flying into DCA this summer due to air traffic control (ATC) constraints.

FACT: For this summer only, the FAA is allowing carriers to reduce up to 10 percent of their slot holdings at New York area airports including LaGuardia (LGA) and John F. Kennedy International (JFK)... But also to reduce flights from DCA to these airports because of current ATC constraints in the New York airspace. As part of the New York slot relief program this summer, FAA is encouraging carriers to utilize their DCA-JFK and DCA-LGA slots to operate to other destinations outside of New York that are not impacted by New York ATC constraints. This summer's FAA slot relief program has no bearing on DCA's capacity to add flights in the future.

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