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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-352](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1999, GAO reported that Reagan National Airport could accommodate at least 36 more slots, which are authorizations from DOT for a takeoff or landing. In 2000 and 2003, two federal statutes, known as AIR-21 and Vision 100, permitted DOT to award 44 new slots to airlines, 24 of which could be used for flights to cities more than 1,250 miles, which was the statutorily mandated limit for non stop flights from Reagan National. The DOT awards went to airlines serving six cities (Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and Seattle). For this year's reauthorization of the FAA, GAO was asked for an update on the capacity of Reagan National to accommodate additional slots and the effect of relaxing the perimeter rule. GAO updated its 1999 study to answer these key questions: (1) To what extent can Reagan National accommodate additional flights? (2) Since AIR-21 and Vision 100, what changes have occurred in market share and fares for flights operating between the six beyond-perimeter cities and the three Washington, D.C., area airports? In commenting on this report, DOT and the airports authority generally agree with our findings but with one exception, the airports authority disagrees with DOT's estimate of slots because it disputes their methodological assumptions. We believe the department's methodology for estimating airport capacity is appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-352.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gerald Dillingham at (202) 512-4803 or dillinghamg@gao.gov.

REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT

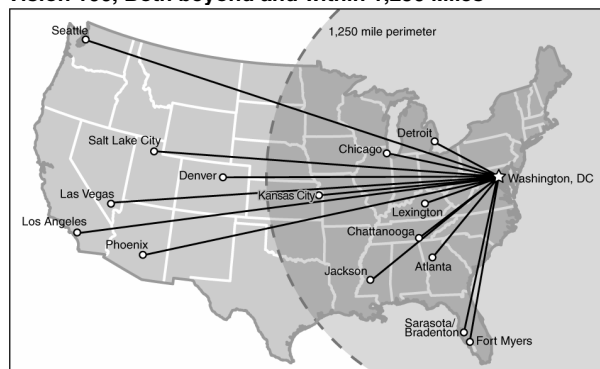
Update on Airport's Capacity to Handle Additional Flights and Impact on Other Area Airports

What GAO Found

Reagan National Airport can accommodate some additional in capacity, but airport infrastructure constrains how much can be added. FAA officials believe that some additional slots can be added, while airport officials have not made an estimate. FAA, using the results of a 1995 DOT capacity study, determined that the airport's airside infrastructure (e.g., runways) could accommodate four additional slots per hour. Airport officials said they were unsure how many additional slots, if any, the airport could accommodate but cited several factors that could limit the airport's capacity to absorb additional slots including the limited number of gates currently available for loading airplanes and other infrastructure constraints. GAO's work shows that even if the number of slots is not increased, there is some opportunity to expand current capacity by filling unused slots and increasing the size of aircraft on existing slots to increase the number of flights and the number of passengers served. Currently, nearly 80 slots are unused because they are at early morning or late evening times and airlines have not applied to use these time slots. In addition, many of the slots reserved for large passenger jets are currently being used by smaller regional jets.

Airlines awarded slots for direct flights between Reagan National and the six beyond-perimeter cities gained significant market share in those selected cities, but the effect of these slots on competing flights operating between these cities and the other Washington, D.C. area airports is not evident. For each of the six beyond-perimeter cities, the direct flights to and from Reagan National captured the majority of passengers flying between that city and Reagan National. In most cases, the airlines charged higher fares than competing connecting flights. GAO did not find evidence in passengers or fare data that would indicate that the new service between Reagan National and the six beyond perimeter cities had substantially affected service from Dulles or Baltimore-Washington International airports to these cities.

Cities Served with Additional Reagan National Airport Slots Permitted under AIR-21 and Vision 100, Both beyond and within 1,250 Miles



Source: GAO analysis of DOT documents.