

The Civil Aeronautics Board in the exercise of its regulatory authority can act to alleviate congestion at airports. The Board in its route cases can authorize direct or through service between points, thus making it possible to bypass congested transfer airports where it has previously been necessary to stop to make connections or to satisfy mandatory certificate requirements. The Board can authorize additional service to smaller airports near major congested hubs where adequate traffic potential justifies direct service to other points.

The Board has recently initiated several cases that could prove to be of major significance in terms of the effective utilization of existing airports and the alleviation of airport congestion. One such case is the Washington-Baltimore area investigation which will explore ways to relieve the serious congestion at Washington National Airport, to distribute more equitably the airline service between the National Capital's three major airports and to provide convenient air service for this area's residents. The Board has also instituted an investigation with respect to the feasibility of using V/STOL aircraft in the northeast corridor from Boston to Washington. The extensive use of STOL aircraft for short-haul flights in the northeast corridor would dramatically reduce the runway and airway congestion that exists today. The transatlantic route investigation is another example of the Board's initiative in seeking to provide better airline service for the American public and to alleviate the congestion that is so severe in the New York City area. The Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board stated in the hearings that only one-third of the transatlantic passengers today actually originate or terminate in New York City. Additional investigations such as these could possibly result in substantial alleviation of the congestion that exists at other airports such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington National, and Atlanta. They certainly offer a sound alternative to the expensive and wasteful course of constructing new airports in these major metropolitan areas for predominantly transfer traffic.

The Board should continue to explore ways to alleviate congestion at airports, because this involves adequacy of commercial airline service just as much as the type of equipment used or fares charged. The Board should review airline scheduling practices to determine whether airport congestion can be alleviated by spreading airline schedules outside of peak hours.

The most efficient utilization of jet aircraft is responsible for part of the peak-hour scheduling practices of the airlines and may inhibit radical changes in airline scheduling practices. But somehow the more efficient utilization of existing airports must be factored into whatever equation the airlines use in determining efficient utilization of aircraft. If airport delays are costing the airlines millions of dollars a year, it would be in their interest to help alleviate the delays by better airport utilization.

The Board must also consider whether it should have specific statutory authority over the scheduling practices of the airlines. The subcommittee will consider this specific point at its hearings and expects the Board to address itself to the need for this regulatory authority.