

Tourism and Civil Aviation -A Symbiotic Relationship



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The importance of 'Accessibility' particularly Air Access and its relationship to the viability of the Regional Tourism Industry cannot be over stated. The Tourism Industry is heavily reliant on air transport for tourists/visitors for business and leisure purposes as well as 'imports' for hotels and food and beverage operations (restaurants, catering businesses etc). Concurrently, tourism provides passengers and creates opportunities for new and increased business for the Air Transport sector. Thus the relationship between Tourism and Air Transport is mutually reinforcing and inter-dependent. Island economies particularly which are geographically isolated are almost fully dependent on air transport access, which is true for the Small Island Developing States of the Greater Caribbean, which are among the most tourism dependent nations.

The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013 published by the World Economic Forum, indicated that the aviation industry supports tourism and international business by providing the world's only rapid worldwide transportation network. Airlines transported 2.8 billion passengers and 47.6 million metric tonnes of air cargo in 2011, connecting the world's cities with 36,000 routes. By providing these services, the aviation industry plays an important role in enabling economic growth and provides an important infrastructure asset that facilitates activities that enhance a nation's

productivity.

The state of the Regional Aviation Industry has been the topic of serious consternation, more-so in recent times. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) recognises that addressing this issue has become critical in light of the looming uncertainties facing Tourism in the Region, which is augmented by the rise in fuel costs, reductions in flights to and from the region's premier hubs and significant shifts in the Regional Aviation industry with mergers, takeovers and even some airlines going out of business or folding. There have been pertinent discussions within recent months regarding the need for investments in the Regions' carriers, with recommendations being made for changes to the way Regional airlines operate. More importantly, industry analysts have called on the Regions' Tourism Ministers and High-level Authorities to take a serious look at the residual effect of the Aviation Industry on the Caribbean's future as the most tourism-dependent region.

Tackling the issue of Regional Aviation within the context of its relationship to Tourism is a serious but complex undertaking, particularly because there are sensitivities related to obtaining landing rights and flight permits; country taxes, fees and tariffs to both airlines and passengers; border safety and security concerns; and International Civil Aviation normative standards and regulations. These topics traverse both public and private sector concerns, hence partnership with leading Aviation and Airline Industry Organisations was deemed an absolute necessity in order to engage and mobilize the wide cross-section of stakeholders needed to effectively address these issues. The Association of Caribbean States was successful in establishing a partnership with the Airports Council International (ACI), Latin America and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA), Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), who came together agreeing that a suitable mechanism was needed in order to provide the opportunity for meaningful dialogue among relevant Tourism and Aviation Industry stakeholders which would be conducive to concrete follow-up actions. The Caribbean Aviation Day Conference was conceived by the mutual desire of the participating Agencies to fulfil this need.

Background

Caribbean Aviation Day is a response to urgent calls from Regional Governments and various interest groups to address the state of the Region's Aviation Industry on which international inbound Tourism greatly depends. The aim is also to explore opportunities to increase intra-regional air connectivity and travel and subsequently facilitate the development of multi-destination tourism packages.

The Aviation Day Conferences are intended to provide a platform for dialogue among the regional tourism and air-transport sectors, and facilitate the formation of strategic alliances among key regional and international stakeholders. This is the second year the partners have come together to host Caribbean Aviation Day, following the success of the first conference which was held in Cancun, Mexico, November 13th 2013. Caribbean Aviation Day 2013 was attended by approximately 50 Aviation Industry and Tourism experts and senior officials from the region, who discussed important matters relating to intra-regional travel, air connectivity and immigration facilitation. This meeting

also set the framework for the key topics to be discussed and followed up in this year's conference.

Through the Caribbean Aviation Day Meetings, the ACS and its partners have sought to tap into existing and potential synergies between the tourism and air transport sectors by increasing dialogue between public and private sector stakeholders operating in both sectors, facilitating open and frank exchanges on issues of mutual interest, while also contributing to knowledge enhancement on key topics, and providing an opportunity for networking and partnerships.

Support for this approach has been received at the regional as well as sub-regional levels. At several fora, issues such as air connectivity, visa/immigration policy and market diversification have been addressed, with recommendations being made for a closer examination of the link between the Region's Aviation policy and Tourism competitiveness. Various high-level Government officials have also been advocating for the pursuit of multi-destination marketing and joint airlift agreements as part of a broad-based strategy to boost tourist arrivals. These are some of the issues which will be addressed at Caribbean Aviation Day 2014.

From the perspective of the ACS Secretary General, Ambassador Alfonso Munera expressed that the Aviation Day Conferences are critical in maintaining the very necessary dialogue between the tourism and air-transport sectors for purposes of improving connectivity within and access to the region by air and sea, which are key pillars to achieve objectives related to Regional Integration, Tourism Development and Trade, which are aligned to the mission and goals of the Association. Mr. Julio Orozco, the Director of Sustainable Tourism further indicated that the ACS through its Directorate of Sustainable Tourism was committed to continue collaborating and working together with its partners to find solutions to the critical issues of air transport affecting the region, which by extension affect the sustainability and growth of the Regions Tourism Industry.

CARIBBEAN AVIATION DAY 2014

Caribbean Aviation Day 2014 will be celebrated under the Theme: Improving the Passenger Experience and Securing Sustainable Market Growth in the Caribbean: A Review of the Latest Technological Trends, Operational Best Practices, Cost Implications and Strategies for 2014 and Beyond.

This event will be held on September 16th, 2014, in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, one day prior to the CTO State of the Industry Conference. A distinguished panel of High-level speakers to include Civil Aviation Authorities, Tourism and Aviation industry experts and Representatives of Regional Tourism and Air Transport Organisations will address the gathering on the following topics:

Aviation, Engine of Economic Growth and Social Development across the Caribbean

Using Automation, Integration and Data to Achieve the Perfect Passenger border Crossing Experience

The Future of Aviation Security and its Impact on the Perfect Passenger Experience

Regional Air Traffic Management Infrastructure and its Impact on Caribbean Aviation

Meeting Invitees

Leaders from across the Tourism and Aviation industry value chain, including Ministries of Tourism and Tourism Authorities, Airline CEOs, Heads of Civil Aviation, Immigration and Customs Authorities, Heads of related Regional and International Organizations and relevant other subject matter experts have been invited to discuss best practices and develop constructive solutions to help shape the future of aviation in the Caribbean Region.

Registration

Participation in this event is free of charge and should be done via the website created for the event: www.aviation-day.com/caribbean/2014. For further information or to request an invitation please email: contactus@aviation-day.com

Date and Location

September 16th, 2014 St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands Marriott's Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort - Harbour Ballroom

Caribbean Aviation Day website: www.aviation-day.com/caribbean/2014

Julio Orozco is the Director of Sustainable Tourism and Amanda Charles is the Adviser of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States. Any correspondence or feedback can be sent to feedback@acs-aec.org