



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
To the House of Assembly**

**by
The Hon. Wayne Furbert JP, MP
Minister of Transport
Update On Air Service Development**

Friday 31st May 2024

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to address this honorable House and the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an update on the status and outlook of our airlift, which is a vital component of Bermuda's economy and the Tourism industry. Airlift is the lifeline that connects Bermuda with the rest of the world, enabling us to access medical care, welcome visitors, conduct business, and enjoy leisure travel. Airlift is a catalyst that sparks opportunities, generates revenues, creates jobs, and enhances our quality of life. It is the engine that drives our growth, innovation, development, and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, we are dedicated to enhancing our airlift capacity, quality, and diversity to ensure Bermuda remains resilient and well supported for our local population, particularly for medical needs. Additionally, we aim to make Bermuda an attractive and accessible destination for both leisure and business air travelers. Today, I will share with you the latest trends in our airlift performance, the challenges we have overcome, and the opportunities we are pursuing. I will also highlight the positive impact that airlift has on our Bermuda economy and our Bermudian people.

Mr Speaker, I will present an overview of the past five years' trends in Bermuda's airlift capacity whilst highlighting the progress and developments we have achieved.

- In 2018, Bermuda experienced a substantial airlift capacity, with an approximate total of 611,000 available seats.
- The following year, 2019, witnessed a slight dip in seat capacity, decreasing to 580,000. This represents a reduction of approximately 5% from the previous year.
- In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant downturn in airlift capacity, plummeting to an all time low of just over 170,000 seats available. This dramatic drop reflects a decrease of about 71% compared to 2019.

- The year 2021 signalled a gradual recovery, with the airlift capacity increasing to approximately 237,000 seats. This marks an increase of about 39 % from the previous year.
- Recovery continued into 2022, with a further increase in seat capacity to 356,000. This represents a substantial rise of approximately 50% compared to 2021.
- By 2023, the airlift capacity reached an approximate 433,000 seats, indicating a further growth of about 22% from 2022.

Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges we had in 2020 due to the pandemic, we did not give up on our airlift, nor did we lose hope for our recovery. We took decisive action to protect our health and safety, to support our airline partners, to stimulate demand, and to restore confidence.

Mr. Speaker as noted in 2023 we reached nearly 433,000, an increase of 22% over 2022. Therefore, as we navigate through the current year, 2024, the upward trajectory continues, and we anticipate airlift capacity to increase even further.

These escalating figures not only underscore a robust recovery for Bermuda but also serve as a testament to our resilience and

adaptability in the face of adversity. The growth in air travel showcases our ability to not just endure challenges but to emerge stronger, thriving as a destination of choice.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, in collaboration with our valued partner stakeholders, has been consistently and diligently working towards enhancing airlift services. Allow me to highlight some of the noteworthy achievements we've made recently which has assisted in our increase in airlift capacity.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to report the developments in our airlift services that have enhanced our connectivity and accessibility to and from Bermuda. These include:

- **American Airlines** launched its flights between Washington Reagan National Airport [DCA] and Bermuda, with seasonal flights which resumed in April 2024. This route offers convenient connections to the US capital and beyond, as well as increase our exposure to a key political and business market.
- **American Airlines** resumed its daily non-stop service to Miami on November 5th, extending its year-round connectivity from Miami to Bermuda. This complements the already established year-round services from JFK and Charlotte.

- **JetBlue's** year-round service to Boston has markedly improved our connectivity and heightened local passenger satisfaction, particularly for medical travel. The reintroduction of this crucial route not only broadens our array of travel choices but also reaffirms our dedication to delivering convenient and efficient air travel services.
- **BermudAir** has established connections with seven major markets, Boston, Westchester New York, Baltimore, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Toronto and Halifax representing a noteworthy achievement in our expansion efforts to provide increased travel options.
- **Mr. Speaker,** we are pleased to announced that United Airlines will be flying year-round from Newark to Bermuda. This is the first time since 2016.

Also, United Airlines' 35th anniversary of providing air service to Bermuda is tomorrow 1 June 2024, and I thanked them for their many years of service and commitment to Bermuda, including their recent increases in seat capacity on their Newark to Bermuda route.

Mr. Speaker, these achievements are not only beneficial for our airlift, but also for our economy, as they generate more revenues, create more jobs, and stimulate more activity. According to the

Bermuda Tourism Authority, the estimated direct spending by air visitors in 2023 was \$341.3M million, an increase of 26% over 2022.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to thank all those who have contributed to the success of our airlift, and who continue to support our efforts to grow and improve it. I want to thank our airline partners, our Airport Authority, our airport operator, our Tourism Authority, our hoteliers, our travel agents, our taxi drivers, our hospitality workers, and our all our public servants who invest in ensuring our airlift is successful.

I also want to thank our visitors, who have chosen Bermuda as their destination of choice, and who have shared their positive feedback and experiences with others. I want to thank our people, who have shown resilience, adaptability, and hospitality, in the face of adversity and change.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that airlift is not just a numbers game, but a people game. Airlift is not just about statistics, but about stories. Airlift is not just about flights, but about feelings. Airlift is not just about transport, but about inspiration. Airlift is not just about Bermuda, but about the world. Airlift is not just about today, but about tomorrow. Airlift is not just about us, but about you.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.