



**CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION**  
**CITY OF CHICAGO**

October 26, 2021

Mr. Paul Lark  
O'Hare International Airport  
P.O. Box 66581  
Chicago, IL 60666

SENT VIA EMAIL: [plark@igcinc.org](mailto:plark@igcinc.org)

Dear Mr. Lark:

The impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been unprecedented and catastrophic for the aviation industry. As you know, our operations, like those of other airports globally, experienced a sudden and sharp decline in international and domestic aviation passenger traffic. Domestic passenger traffic has gradually recovered during the Summer 2021 season, driven by increased COVID-19 vaccination rates and loosening of travel restrictions across the United States. International activity has been slower to rebound, as changing travel restrictions continue to result in adjustments to air carrier schedules and short-notice changes to scheduled air service. At the same time, cargo-only flights have increased to record-breaking levels as a result of COVID-19. The Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) recognizes these challenges and their impacts on allocating facilities for current and future air service. This letter provides policy guidance related to relief measures to be implemented as a result of COVID-19 and special accommodations to be made related to cargo-only flights at O'Hare International Airport.

**Scheduling Relief**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) addressed the impact of COVID-19 in a March 2020 notice addressing usage requirements in accordance with recommendations from International Air Transport Association (IATA). On March 11, 2020, the FAA notified IATA Level 2 airports, including Chicago O'Hare International Airport, that it would prioritize flights cancelled due to COVID-19 through May 31, 2020, when establishing a carrier's operational baseline for the next equivalent season. On April 9, 2020, the FAA formally amended the notice, and granted a full waiver for the Summer 2020 scheduling season. On October 7, 2020, the FAA extended COVID-19 relief through the Winter 2020/2021 season, with additional provisions aimed at facilitating access to carriers willing to use

available capacity on an ad hoc basis. This policy was extended on January 13, 2021, to cover the entire Summer 2021 season.

On October 18, 2021, the FAA issued a notice extending a waiver for Level 2 airports through the entire Winter 2021/2022 season ending on March 26, 2022. With this action, the FAA is extending, for international operations only, its COVID-19-related policy for prioritizing flights cancelled at designated IATA Level 2 airports in the United States, for purposes of establishing a carrier's operational baseline for the next equivalent season. The City is taking a similar approach in granting relief to international operations only and is hereby applying the following conditions:

- All schedules submitted and assigned by the Scheduling Manager for the Winter 2021/2022 season and not intended to be operated must be returned at least four weeks prior to the date of the intended operation to allow other carriers an opportunity to operate at these times on an ad hoc basis without historic precedence. Air Carriers must comply with this condition for operations scheduled from November 22, 2021, through March 26, 2022, and therefore should begin notifying the Scheduling Manager of allocated schedule returns or changes to the Initial Schedule Submission on October 25, 2021. Air Carriers returning full-season slots or schedule assignments at an airport outside the United States will similarly return the complementary full-season schedule assignment at Chicago O'Hare International Airport.
- While flights (including domestic flights) assigned and operated on an ad hoc basis during the Winter 2021/2022 season may not be considered Existing Historical Flights, the Scheduling Manager will prioritize these flights over new submissions when processing assignments for the Winter 2022/2023 season.

Exemptions to these conditions may be granted if the Air Carrier can prove, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Scheduling Manager, that the intended operation was cancelled due to unanticipated government restrictions that prevent or severely restrict operations to or from the intended airport of operation. In addition, the CDA encourages Air Carriers to return schedules not intended to be operated as early as reasonably possible.

### **Accommodation of Cargo-Only Flights**

The CDA will continue to allow operation of cargo-only flights at Terminal 5 gates and adjacent hardstands throughout the Winter 2021/2022 season to accommodate cargo demand that cannot be accommodated at dedicated cargo facilities. Operation of cargo-only flights at Terminal 5 gates and adjacent hardstands shall be subject to the following conditions, effective December 1, 2021:

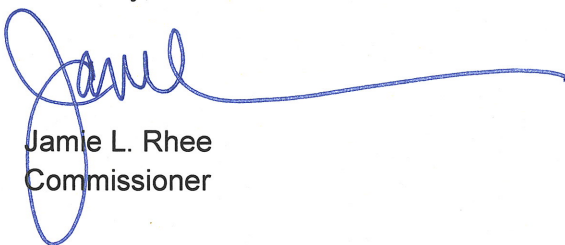
- The Scheduling Manager may only approve schedules for cargo-only flights on a month-by-month basis and in one-month increments.
- The Scheduling Manager shall not approve any cargo-only flights at Terminal 5 gates and adjacent hardstands between 12:00 and 20:00 Central Time so as to not interfere with peak periods for passenger flights.
- Cargo-only flights shall be given a lower priority than flights carrying passengers, including both new services and passenger flights operated on an ad hoc basis, for access to Terminal 5 gates equipped with passenger loading bridges.
- Air Carriers shall be prepared to handle cargo-only flights from Terminal 5 hardstands, including flights previously handled at Terminal 5 gates. Ground handling and servicing, including flight crew transportation to and from the aircraft, shall be provided by the Air Carrier and/or its ground handler. During snow removal operations and other weather-related events, cargo-only flights will be the first flights affected from their coordinated times of operation due to limitations on the availability of Terminal 5 facilities.
- The Scheduling Manager shall not consider cargo-only flights operating on Terminal 5 gates and hardstands to be Existing Historical Flights in subsequent Equivalent Seasons unless these flights carried passengers during a prior Equivalent Season and are otherwise covered by other provisions in this waiver.

The City may revise or rescind this policy pertaining to accommodate of cargo-only flights with a 30-day notice to the Scheduling Manager.

In addition to the considerations above, the priorities, procedures and requirements outlined in the TSUPs shall remain applicable. In particular, all services not covered by this waiver, scheduled as of August 31, 2021 (Historics Baseline Date) and operated in Winter 2021/2022 shall be considered Existing Historical Flights for the purpose of scheduling of gate, hardstand and ancillary space for the IATA Winter 2022/2023 season so long as they do not interfere with services covered by this waiver. Additionally, none of the provisions contained in this letter shall be considered to supersede the provisions outlined in the 2018 Airline Use and Lease Agreement.

The City understands the continued difficulties affecting air travel associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The City wishes to extend the temporary relief afforded to air carriers related to scheduling requirements, but only to the extent that these measures are temporary and targeted, matched to the parameters of the crisis, and based on evidence related to the nature of each market. To that effect, while the City reserves the right to adjust the end date for these COVID-19 exemptions beyond March 26, 2022, Air Carriers should not assume any further relief on the basis of COVID-19 for international operations will be forthcoming beyond the end of the Winter 2021/2022 season. Also, Air Carriers should not assume that sufficient capacity will be available to handle cargo-only flights at Terminal 5 gates and adjacent hardstands beyond the end of the Winter 2021/2022 season.

Sincerely,



Jamie L. Rhee  
Commissioner