

# Worldwide Airport Slot Board

## Changes in Airport Levels as a result of COVID-19

4 November 2020

### Background

1. Airport levels are clearly defined in section 1.4.1, 3, 4 & 5 of the Worldwide Airport Slot Guidelines (WASG) and principles of coordination in section 1.7.
2. The capacity declaration process is covered in 6.1 of the WASG and clearly defines the requirement for a “thorough demand and capacity analysis” and the types of methodology to be used.
3. Section 6.1.5 of the WASG states that an objective of the demand and capacity analysis is to avoid, wherever possible, the need for the airport to change from Level 1 to Level 2 or from Level 2 to Level 3. Section 6.1.6 goes further to state that the objective should be to identify ways to reduce or remove the need for coordination which would result in changing the airport from Level 3 to Level 2 or from Level 2 to Level 1.
4. The process for changing levels is set out in section 6.3, 6.4 and 6.6 of the WASG and requires that the responsible authority completes a full and thorough demand and capacity analysis and consults with all relevant stakeholders. The same process applies when moving up levels as well as down levels.
5. Such a review can be triggered by either the responsible authority, the airport managing body or by airlines operating at the airport representing at least 50% of the traffic.
6. Section 6.7 covers a temporary change in level and refers to the need for an increase in level rather than a reduction. 6.7.2 infers that a temporary change is for a period of not more than a single season so as not to entitle an airline operating to accrue historic entitlement.
7. Section 6.8.1 of the WASG requires the responsible authority to notify all relevant stakeholders and IATA of a change in level no later than 01 April for the next winter season and 01 September for the next summer season.

### Review

8. The general principle of limiting coordination to those airports where it is generally required remains sound and is a fundamental of the WASG.
9. The process for managing levels is well documented in the WASG. The requirement to perform a demand and capacity assessment and then consult with all relevant stakeholders already allows for all interested parties to voice opinions on the proposals.
10. The responsible authority for the designation of airports may be required to follow the process determined by Legislation in that jurisdiction.
11. There should be no barriers for an airport to change levels either way if the demand and capacity analysis supports such a change and having consulted with all relevant stakeholders. The demand and capacity assessment process should be the basis for any decision.
12. A temporary change for a season should only be considered for an increase in level and should comply with 6.7.2 of the WASG. A temporary change resulting in a reduction for a season is not recommended.
13. A reduction in level should remain in place until the responsible authority declares otherwise having considered a demand and capacity analysis and consulted with all relevant stakeholders in line with section 6.3 and 6.4 of the WASG.
14. The timing of notifying relevant stakeholders and IATA (WASG 6.8.1) applies to all changes in level. It is questionable if a reduction in level requires the same notification as an increase. A reduction from Level 3 to Level 2 can be implemented immediately once the decision is made allowing all stakeholders to benefit

from not being subject to utilisation targets and slot performance monitoring. Whereas it would not be practical to notify a change from Level 2 to Level 3 at any other time than prior to initial coordination for the season that the change will apply in line with 6.8.1.

## **Recommendations**

15. In general, the provisions in section 6 of the WASG provides sufficient guidance in the application of level changes. The following recommendations add further clarity to the question of temporary reductions in levels.
16. Reference added to 6.7 of the WASG that temporary changes to levels only apply to increasing levels.
17. Section 6.8.1 of the WASG amended to reflect that reduction in airport levels should apply immediately once the responsible authority confirms the level change. The Aviation Industry community is facing an unprecedented challenge as a result of travel restrictions introduced globally in response to the COVID-19 crisis and the sudden drop in passenger demand. Airlines are adjusting their schedules and airports are adjusting their capacity in order to meet these requirements and minimize the economic impact of the reduced demand. Slot usage requirement waivers have been granted for the Northern Summer season at all slot coordinated airports globally, providing relief from the use-it or lose-it rule according to applicable regulations. The WASB is now asking airlines to use this flexibility responsibly to manage their slot portfolios and schedules in a fair, reasonable and appropriate manner.