



Industry restart: Forming new interline partnerships within the multilateral interline framework

Information for airlines

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Why is interline important to the industry restart

The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to most airlines suspending scheduled passenger operations.

New interline relationships will be a vital enabler of industry recovery, providing traffic for airlines and connectivity for passengers. Airlines may need to pursue new and more varied relationships to support their networks as they recover, and to allow them to serve more origin – destination markets as their operations restart progressively.

At the direction of the IATA Board of Governors, IATA member airlines are currently exploring opportunities to reinvigorate the IATA multi-lateral interline framework. It has also been acknowledged that there would be benefit in educating airlines on the tools already available today. This is the purpose of this information paper.

How are interline relationships built today?

The current IATA framework that supports multilateral interline is comprised of many IATA standards, and multi-lateral agreements including the Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreement (MITA) and the Multilateral Prorate Agreement Passenger (MPA-P).

The IATA framework originated at a time before code sharing and before the advent of immunized airline alliances. IATA had immunity to coordinate international tariffs, and airlines routinely cooperated with each other in selling international itineraries. As international markets were liberalized and competition increased, multilateral interline continued to be important, but has evolved.

Interline now occurs more within closer commercial arrangements such as codeshare agreements, joint ventures (JVs) and alliance groupings. In 2017, less than one third of interline passengers were carried outside of one of these closer commercial agreements and this proportion has declined steadily over the last 10 years. However, all partnerships use the foundation of the IATA system. During the industry restart, multilateral interlining will also be important even without closer commercial agreements.

Most interline relationships between IATA members are now built on a foundation of IATA Resolutions, involvement in IATA multi-lateral agreements and many other separate bilateral agreements



	Core framework to interline passengers				Closer forms of partnership	
	Legal interline agreement	Procedures	Technical connectivity	Revenue outcome	Other agreements not usually requiring ATI	Joint venture (JV) Agreements usually requiring ATI
IATA Resolutions Binding on all IATA member airlines.	None	Ticketing, reservation, baggage and other core processes	None	None	None	None
Other IATA standards Non-binding	None	Recommended practices, and other non-binding standards	Data exchange standards and associated implementation guides	None	Data exchange standards and associated implementation guides	None
IATA multi-lateral agreements	IATA Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreement (MITA) concurrence	None	None	Multi-lateral prorate agreement (MPA-P)	ZED and MIBA	None
Agreements formed separately by partners	or bilateral interline traffic agreement	and any other bilaterally agreed procedures over and above IATA standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic ticketing general business requirements (GBR) Through check-in (IATCI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special prorate agreement (SPA) RBD mapping Fare concurrences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Codeshare agreements FFP reciprocity Lounges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue / cost sharing Coordination of capacity, pricing and schedules Coordination of sales and marketing
Alliances	Alliances may harmonize many of these aspects across a group of airlines, to the extent permitted by law. JV agreements may also be in place between some airlines within the same alliance.					

IATA Resolutions

IATA Resolutions are the highest level of agreement between IATA member airlines. They represent an agreement between all IATA member airlines to do certain things the same way. Most Resolutions touching passenger processes are developed by IATA member airlines through the IATA Passenger Standards Conference structure. They are binding on all members unless agreed otherwise. They describe core processes around ticketing, reservations, disruption handling and baggage that support interoperability across IATA member airlines. It is important that all IATA member airlines are aware of the obligations they have under IATA Resolutions, and all the common behaviours that IATA Resolutions already enforce that support interline relationships. All IATA Passenger Standards Conference Resolutions and Recommended Practices are published within the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution manual. This is available at <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/passenger-standards-conference-manual/>

Some Resolutions also refer to separately published manuals which also have the authority of a Resolution and are binding on members. Examples include the Revenue Accounting Manual (under the authority of Resolution 663) and the

Reservations Interline Messaging Procedures (AIRIMP) under the authority of Resolution 760. These are separately available at <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/a4a-iata-reservations-interline-procedures--airimp/>

Other IATA Standards

The Resolutions are complemented by other non-binding IATA standards. These include the many data exchange standards which support system interfaces and automation of processes such as scheduling, reservations, electronic ticketing, departure control, baggage, and offer and order management. IATA data exchange standards are included within the tool kit of the electronic version of the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution manual, and many are also publicly available at developer.iata.org.



The IATA Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreement (MITA)

IATA also manages several important multi-lateral agreements. These agreements are managed as industry standards with a strict governance around changes. Airlines may become parties to these agreements and avoid the administrative burden of negotiating and executing agreements separately with every partner.

The Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreement (MITA) is a cornerstone of the IATA interline framework. It is a single interline agreement under which IATA and non-IATA member airlines can form a contractual relationship to interline. The MITA agreement itself describes in detail the expected behaviours between interline partners. It requires interline partners to publish their tariffs and schedules, issue and accept electronic tickets transfer baggage, handle baggage claims and manage interline billing and settlement.

All interline agreements now require a bilateral interline electronic ticket connectivity. Separate capability is also required for electronic miscellaneous documents (EMDs). In addition to collating and publishing MITA participants and concurrences under the MITA agreement, IATA also collates and publishes bilateral electronic ticket and EMD interfaces, which may occur separately from MITA concurrences where the underlying interline relationship is formed through a bilateral agreement. This is often the case when the connectivity involves an airline that is not a MITA participant. This information is published by IATA on the MITA Extranet site and is also published regularly in the MITA Manual publication.

The main MITA agreement is published as IATA Resolution 780. Other multi-lateral agreements also exist within IATA standards to cater for other types of relationships. This includes a "one-way" agreement, where one partner issues tickets and the other partner honours tickets, but not vice versa. This also includes multi-lateral agreements to support intermodal interline and interline using enhanced distribution.

To form a contractual relationship under any of the multi-lateral agreements, airlines simply need to become party to the agreement, and then concur with any other airline that is already a party. Once the other airline accepts the concurrence, the airlines have formed an interline agreement under the MITA.

To become a party or form concurrences, members should send a request to IATA via the Customer Portal (portal.iata.org). In the case of concurrences, evidence should be provided that the other party agrees.

The Multilateral Prorate Agreement – Passenger (MPA-P) and the IATA Prorate Agency

IATA also administers the Prorate Agency, a special interest group which manages the Multilateral Proration Agreement Passenger (MPA-P), a default agreement for the proration of interline through-fares.

The Prorate Agency is also responsible for publishing reference data which is used to perform proration calculations under the MPA-P. This includes prorate factor miles (PFMs), base amounts, and airline filed provisos.

The MPA-P proration agreement is built around a proration based on distance, adjusted slightly to reflect geographic cost differences through the application of prorate factor miles. Airlines are also able to protect the revenue outcome of shorter sectors by filing provisos. A proviso is a filed rule which outlines a required minimum proration result.

To become a party to the MPA-P, airlines sign the MPA-P and Prorate Agency Agreement (PAA). There is no cost involved in becoming a Signatory airline. Further information on the Prorate Agency and the MPA-P is available at iata.org/en/services/finance/prorate-agency/ or by contacting prorate@iata.org

Participation in the MPA-P is optional. It is not mandatory to be an IATA member airline to become a party to the agreement.



Parties to the MPA-P may still decide to separately negotiate bilateral “special prorate agreements” or SPAs. These agreements may apply to some or all proration outcomes with different partners. SPAs are always negotiated separately, airlines within the Interline Billing and Settlement Operations Working Group produced a [best practice check-list document for SPAs](#).

Booking class mapping, fares, and pricing automation

Interline agreements require each individual airline to review their current pricing approaches. Airlines may wish to have their fares applied for travel on a partner, or to have the partner’s fares applied for travel on their own services. Airlines may wish to allow their fares to be applied in combination with their partners fares, or to restrict this.

Airlines should discuss and agree with their partners around these commercial arrangements. Many of these decisions can be applied through pricing automation. Airlines may then wish to review filed fare and rule data that is used within automated pricing environments.

This includes, among other things, Reservation Booking Designators (RBD) mappings, Routings, Flight Application, Combinations, various Fees and Charges, and Baggage policies.

For carriers instructing this data with ATPCO, ATPCO provide an E-learning course, “[Partnering for Success: Interline, Code Share and Alliance](#)”. This course is available free of charge for a limited time [here](#). Airlines should contact ATPCO through their [customer support portal](#) to access this training, or for further assistance on setting up interline agreements.

IATA Recommended Practice 1728 identifies ATPCO’s Single Source RBD Service (also known as the ATPCO Chart 1 and Chart 2) as the recommended source of carrier’s mapping of booking classes for IATA member airlines.

It is important to note that these commercial decisions impact the fares that are collected from customers. Where interline billing is based on proration of customer fares (as it would be under the MPA-P), these decisions will also impact the

revenue that is billed between partner airlines. A bilateral special prorate agreement may also be negotiated that does not directly reference the fares collected from customer.

System configurations

IATA standards define data exchange formats and associated processes. When implementing system to system interfaces however, specific aspects of configurations are established bilaterally between partners. This is required in many different processes such as electronic ticketing, reservations, interline through-check in (IATCI), baggage messaging and departure control. This often involves the completion of General Business Requirements (GBR) documents that are agreed between the parties and used to support the configuration and testing of systems.

While GBRs are not standardized, IATA has published a number of model GBR agreements, including one for electronic ticketing and one for electronic miscellaneous documents (EMDs). These guides have been developed under the authority of the Ticketing Group and are available on the IATA Standard Setting Workspace, [here](#).

Multilateral staff and duty travel arrangements

Airlines must commercially determine with whom they wish to form agreements to facilitate the movement of staff members travelling for leisure or duty. IATA administers the ZED/MIBA Forum (ZMF) which is a separate entity that exists to administer the Zonal Employee Discount (ZED) and Multilateral Interline Business travel Agreement (MIBA) programs. These agreements allow airlines to quickly form relationships to facilitate travel for staff members. Airlines interested in participating in these agreements should contact Valerie von Glasow, ZMF Coordinartor, at vonglasowv@iata.org.



Enhancements to the multi-lateral interline framework

Many aspects of interline arrangements are often separately negotiated between airlines when implementing new interline relationships. This presents a limitation of the current MITA, in that many aspects of an interline relationship now require a separate agreement. At the direction of the IATA Board of Governors, IATA member airlines are currently exploring opportunities to develop industry guidance on areas that would otherwise be subject to separate agreements.

These explorations are occurring within the Interline Group under the Plan Standards Board of the Passenger Standards Conference. Any changes to industry standards that are proposed as part of this activity will be adopted under the Governance of the Conference as usual. Member airlines interested in participating in these conversations should contact standards@iata.org.

The Future of Interline

Simplifying the current interline process will provide opportunity for carriers to operate and maintain connectivity in this time of crisis. However, there are further opportunities to explore the interline framework.

A package of work was developed under the IATA Distribution Advisory Council in early 2020, as the "Future of Interline" program. This program sought to develop a new framework for interline, including a new Standard Retailer Supplier Interline Agreement (as an alternative to the MITA). It also involved the development of standards based around offer and order capability and real-time request and response data exchange enabling carriers to do business with new partners that cannot support legacy interline processes.

This package of work was officially paused in April 2020 as IATA suspended many transformation programs to allow the industry to focus on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the industry restart. The Future of Interline program will be restarted when appropriate. Further information on this program of work is available at www.iata.org/en/programs/airline-distribution/future-of-interline/ and within a [whitepaper](#) published by IATA in 2019.

While the Future of Interline program is officially paused, standards development activity continues as normal under the Passenger Standards Conference. Airlines and strategic partners within the Interline Group will continue to explore more medium-term changes to the interline framework where these could support industry restart. This may involve an exploration into hybrid approaches between traditional interline processes and offer and order-based processes (for example, interline between ticketed and ticket-less carriers). It will also continue to investigate incremental opportunities such as interline ancillaries. Member airlines interested in participating in these conversations should contact standards@iata.org.



The tools in the multi-lateral interlining tool kit

	What it is	How to use it?	Where to find it?		
IATA Resolutions and standards references in Resolutions which are binding on all IATA members	Passenger Standards	IATA Resolutions form an agreement between all IATA member airlines, and a basis for common behaviours across airlines.	Resolutions are published within the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution Manual. Other manuals are published separately. These publications are available at iata.org/en/publications/store/		
	Conference Resolutions				
	Reservations Interline Messaging Procedures (AIRIMP)				
	Revenue Accounting Manual				
Multilateral agreements	MITA Agreement Resolution 780	Multilateral agreement under which airlines can form a contractual interline relationship.	Published within the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution Manual, or within the MITA Manual. These publications are available at iata.org/en/publications/store/ To become a party or form concurrences, members should send a request to IATA via the Customer Portal https://portal.iata.org In the case of concurrences, evidence should be provided that the other party agrees.		
	MITA Agreement – One-way Resolution 780e				
	MITA Agreement – Intermodal Recommended Practice 1780e				
	MITA Agreement – Enhanced Distribution Recommended Practice 1780f				
	Multilateral Prorate Agreement – Passenger (MPA-P)			Multilateral agreement under which revenue division of through fares can be agreed.	To become a party to the MPA-P, airlines should sign the MPA-P and Prorate Agency Agreement (PAA). Note: there is no cost involved in becoming a Signatory airline.



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			Further information on the Prorate Agency and the MPA-P is available at iata.org/en/services/finance/prorate-agency/ or prorate@iata.org
	Zonal Employee Discount (ZED) agreement	Agreement under which airlines can form an agreement to facilitate leisure travel for staff members.	Managed by the ZED/MIBA Forum, which is administered on behalf of its members by IATA.
	Multilateral Interline Business Travel Agreement (MIBA)	Agreement under which airlines can form an agreement to facilitate duty travel for staff members.	Airlines interested in participating in these agreements should contact Valerie von Glasow at vonglasowv@iata.org
Non-binding IATA standards	Passenger Standards Conference Recommended Practices	IATA Resolutions form an agreement between all IATA member airlines, and a basis for common behaviours across airlines.	Published within the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution Manual, available at https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/passenger-standards-conference-manual/
	Airports and Reservations EDIFACT messaging implementation guides	Guidance on the implementation of EDIFACT messages supporting electronic ticketing and reservations	Published within the Passenger Standards Conference Resolution Manual Toolbox, available at https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/passenger-standards-conference-manual/ Alternatively, the implementation guides are available to IATA members and Strategic Partners under the EDIFACT Group page on the Standard Setting Workspace .
Tools to help with agreements formed separately by partners	Electronic ticketing model General Business Requirements (GBR)	A model which can be used to develop a GBR between new partners around interline electronic ticketing.	Available in the Standard Setting Workspace under the IATA Ticketing Group page on the Standard Setting Workspace .



What it is	How to use it?	Where to find it?
Electronic Miscellaneous Document (EMD) model General Business Requirements (GBR)	A model which can be used to develop a GBR between new partners around interline EMDs.	Available in the Standard Setting Workspace under the IATA Ticketing Group page on the Standard Setting Workspace .
Template agreement for booking method for irregular operations	Resolution 766 requires interline partners to bilaterally agree the method that should be used when obtaining inventory for use in passenger accommodations following an irregular operation. A template was developed by IATA and may be used as a model to build such an agreement.	This template is available at https://www.iata.org/contentassets/c33c192da39a42fcac34cb5ac81fd2ea/inventory-agreement-template-v1.docx
Special Prorate Agreement (SPA) Checklist	A checklist that can be used internally to ensure that a special prorate agreement (SPA) can be coded clearly and comprehensively within the Revenue Accounting System.	This template is available at https://www.iata.org/contentassets/c33c192da39a42fcac34cb5ac81fd2ea/spa-coding-check-list.xlsx