

DOT assigns Cape Town service to Delta, United

- A Monitor Desk Report

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The U.S. Department of Transportation has tentatively allocated three weekly frequencies each to Delta Air Lines and United Airlines for proposed flights to Cape Town, South Africa, according to a DOT order issued Friday.

Delta has wanted to add three weekly flights between Atlanta and Cape Town, while United has suggested a route between Washington, DC and the South African city. However, only four of the 21 weekly scheduled return combinations allowed under the US-South Africa Air Transport Agreement were available, not the six requested. This restriction put Delta and United at odds with each other, as both had made requests – and different appeals as to why each carrier’s respective proposal would “better serve the public” – for three of the four remaining frequencies.

The DOT negotiated with the South African Ministry of Transport to allow two additional frequencies to accommodate the request for all six. The South African branch “advised on 22 June that if certain conditions are met, the two additional frequencies should be considered as proponents of the agreement.”

This announcement led to DOT’s provisional allocations to Delta and United. The

DOT has requested that the South African branch accept the airlines' applications by 15 August. Furthermore, DOT recommends that Delta and United each receive two of the four currently available frequencies, and one each of the two additional service frequencies, if authorized.

"We express our sincere gratitude to the Department of Transportation, as well as to the numerous heads of government and society, airports, customers and staff who supported this application, for recognizing the enormous benefits of tourism, trade and diplomacy that are a direct link between Cape Town and Washington, DC, provide," said U.S. President Brett Hart in a statement.

The airline added that it expects aircraft to be for sale when the airline receives a final order for approval from DOT.

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