

ALPA's Role in the Environmental Debate

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Those of us who fly airplanes are constantly reminded of the beauty of our planet. Many of us have never lost the sense of awe from seeing Earth, plus the weather and

the sky, from the special vantage point of a cockpit seat. It bestows upon us a unique understanding of the inter-relationship among human, machine, and environment. In recent months, the focus on human contributions to changes in the environment has intensified. Part of that debate has specifically concentrated on the effect that the growing airline industry may have upon current and future climate issues.

In other parts of the world, our industry has come under increasingly virulent attacks for inflicting damage upon the environment. Aviation is a visible target and has drawn the attention of many groups who condemn the industry for being a driver of projected climate change. As a pilot, I deal with facts, and the facts clearly show that while aviation is a contributor to greenhouse gas and other emissions, it plays only a small role in the overall issue.

Whether attackers distort the facts out of ignorance or are deliberately vague about them, the fundamental question is whether we as a society will act in a balanced, measured, and coordinated response to a very real problem. Singling out or exacting financial penalty upon the airline industry disproportionate to its contribution to the problem will not solve it.

Another simple fact is that aviation is a driver of economic, social, political, and industrial world development. Aviation helps to raise the standard of living of people worldwide. Tourism is

the No. 1 global economic sector, and aviation is the backbone of that industry. The ability of cities, regions, and nations to achieve maximum benefit from the global economy will depend, to a considerable extent, upon the way in which aviation develops in the future, in the United States and Canada and abroad. The work that we perform in our cockpits shapes, in very real ways, the quality of life for millions of people around the globe.

The airline industry must, therefore, find ways to become sustainable. This is increasingly difficult in a world in

NextGen, RNP/RNAV, and constant descent arrivals (now known as optimized descent profiles) and inclusion on the Commercial Aviation Alternative Fuels Initiative. ALPA safety committees are involved with designing and testing new environmentally friendly engines and airframe components as well as surface optimization schemes at several U.S. airports.

As our environmental interests are aligned with those of other airline industry organizations, ALPA has joined with the FAA, the Air Transport Association, the Cargo Airline Association, Boeing,



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which the cost of oil is hitting \$100 per barrel and emissions charges threaten to cost as much per flight as jet fuel. It behooves us as employees of airlines to fully understand what this means to both short- and long-term viability. U.S. aviation interests have a responsibility to actively participate, in concert with the government, in formulating and implementing technological, operational, and market-based measures designed to reduce and limit aviation's effect on the environment, while preserving the quality of our jobs and careers.

The context of sustainability for current and future airline operations must include acknowledgment that the airline industry has some unique challenges, such as long lead times for implementation of new technologies and the lack of any current alternative to fossil fuels. ALPA is at the forefront of ensuring that the technological and operational challenges are being safely met through the Association's participation in designing and implementing

Pratt & Whitney, and others to co-host an Environmental Forum in March.

The purpose of the Forum is threefold: First, we need to put the environmental debate into context and educate our members on the basic facts. Second, we must look at some of the policy options and decisions that are designed to curtail and reduce overall emissions. And finally, we need to get the good news out—the airline industry has done its part to be a responsible industry and will continue to do so and will work to accelerate gains already realized in reducing noise and emissions.

As airline pilots, we are in a unique position to participate on many levels to provide ourselves, our families, and other people throughout the world with the opportunity to experience all that air travel affords us. To preserve the view from our cockpit, ALPA pledges to help address the effects on the environment today while working collaboratively with industry and government to seek a sustainable tomorrow. 🌍

ALPA Meeting the Environmental Challenge

Traveling via scheduled airline is the safest and one of the cleanest and most energy-efficient forms of mass transit. The U.S. airline industry has a strong, enviable record of contributing ever more value to the economy, while continuously reducing its effect on the environment. In spite of that record, the industry is coming under increasing attack by environmentalists and sympathetic government authorities to further reduce aircraft emissions and noise. In response, ALPA and its industry partners are actively seeking ways to reduce aviation's effect on the atmosphere, while at the same time protecting our jobs, our families, and our way of life.

Long-term solutions involve breakthrough technologies and strategic airspace redesigns. Short-term and mid-term goals include operational and procedural modifications in which airline pilots will play a crucial role. But pilots cannot do it alone—any gains will be difficult to achieve as significant, interrelated challenges must be met by the industry, given the current state of technology and equipment of the world's airline fleet.

Therefore, procedures designed to limit environmental impacts need to include collaborative decision-making. We can potentially lower fuel consumption and emissions, but that will necessitate flying at slower speeds. We may lower emissions of NO_x, but potentially increase noise in the process. Standard solutions do not exist—we need integrated, tailored solutions to address the capacity issues and flexible use of airspace.

Some of the many issues facing ALPA include the following:

- States adopting voluntary and/or mandatory efficiency goals to put pressure on airlines to espouse more stringent fuel policies, possibly leading to changes in fuel reserve regulations.
- Economic pressure on airlines when the European Union fulfills its promise to adopt and implement some form of an EU Emissions Trading Scheme

- The need for a coordinated ALPA/IFALPA approach to and position on global environmental matters, including influence at ICAO and the Group on International Aviation Climate Change.
- Funding, implementation time lines, and harmonization of NextGen and SESAR ATC improvements.

To address these issues, in addition to co-hosting a 2-day seminar



To address environmental issues, ALPA is co-hosting a 2-day seminar on aviation and the environment in March, and is participating on several environmental boards.

(ETS) for intra-Europe traffic in 2011.

- Economic pressure on airlines imposed by proposed legislative acts, such as the Lieberman-Warner bill in the Senate.
- Global legal battles over the inclusion of international traffic in the EU ETS and the possibility of ensuing trade wars.
- Discussion among the airline global alliances concerning the need to pool credits and allowances inside the alliances and find ways to ameliorate fallout for their airlines.
- The absence of common procedural designs for constant descent arrivals and other procedures designed to mitigate emissions.

on aviation and the environment in March, ALPA is participating on several environmental boards, including the Partnership for Air Transportation Noise and Emissions Reduction (PARTNER), the Commercial Aviation Alternative Fuels Initiative, and the Environmental Working Group of the Joint Planning and Development Office.

The challenges are many. But as it has for the last 76 years, ALPA will be at the forefront of meeting those challenges as aviation helps usher in a safer, cleaner, more environmentally friendly world.—*Capt. Mary McMillan (United)*