



May 11, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
U.S. Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP  
UK Secretary of State for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

Re: The Safe Restart of Transatlantic Travel

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Secretary of State:

As chief executive officers of U.S. and UK passenger airlines, we are writing to propose a summit – led by your respective offices – with us to explore a path to safely and expeditiously reopen transatlantic travel in a manner that aligns with public health objectives. The UK Government has already published its framework for resuming international travel, so the timing for this summit is key. The airline industry needs adequate lead time to establish a plan for restarting air services, including scheduling aircraft and crews for these routes as well as for marketing and selling tickets.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have partnered closely with both governments to prioritize the health and safety of our passengers and employees, working tirelessly to implement new travel protocols and testing requirements. We commend the success of your respective vaccine programs, with over 42 percent of the adult population having now been fully vaccinated in the U.S., and 59 percent having received at least one dose of the vaccine. In the UK, as of early May, 27 percent of the adult population have been fully vaccinated, and 62 percent have received at least one dose.<sup>1</sup> The trend for both countries is for all adults who wish to be vaccinated to have at least their first dose by the end of July 2021. This success can serve as the foundation for the UK and the U.S. to lead the world by demonstrating how to safely re-open this crucial air-corridor.

Public health must guide the reopening of international air travel and we are confident that the aviation industry possesses the right tools, based on data and science, to enable a safe and meaningful restart to transatlantic travel. U.S. and UK citizens would benefit from the significant testing capability and the successful trials of digital applications to verify health credentials. Most importantly, the vaccine roll-out means people are benefiting from the protection of their health and the reduction in transmission of COVID-19 that vaccination brings.<sup>2</sup> These critical tools were not available last year when travel restrictions were implemented.

Safely reopening borders between the U.S. and UK is essential for the continued economic recovery of both nations. Air travel is a critical enabler of trade between our countries that was worth 273 billion USD or 196 billion GBP in 2019, including the transport of 900,000 tons of air cargo. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Report “The Transatlantic Economy 2021”<sup>3</sup> highlights that in terms of the U.S.-UK investment balance, U.S. foreign direct investment in the UK totalled a record 851 billion USD or 612 billion GBP in 2019, and UK foreign direct investment in the U.S. was roughly 500 billion

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1202074/share-of-population-vaccinated-covid-19-by-county-worldwide/>

<sup>2</sup> According to an Oxera report of March 26, 2021, “Impact of Vaccination on Risk of International Air Travel”, vaccines reduce the risk of imported infections from travellers and minimize domestic COVID-19 risk from air passengers by ~300 percent. <https://www.oxera.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-vaccination-on-risk-of-international-air-travel.pdf>

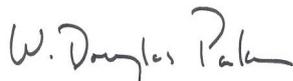
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uschamber.com/report/the-transatlantic-economy-2021>

USD or 360 billion GBP. Returning travellers to the skies is essential to securing future investment in the world's most dynamic enterprises.

The return of transatlantic air travel would not only have a significant, positive impact on our respective economies but will also reunite those who have been separated from their loved ones for over a year. In 2019, over 22 million passengers travelled between the U.S. and the UK, with approximately four million of those travellers visiting friends and family.

We know that you share our ambition to reopen this vital trade and travel artery between our two nations. Our airlines continue to engage at every opportunity with the individual initiatives of your departments but we believe that your joint leadership at a summit (virtual or in-person) with us prior to the G7 Summit would allow for a robust discussion to ensure the timely return of air travel to the people and economies of our respective countries.

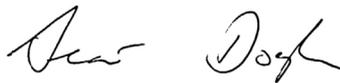
Sincerely,



W. Douglas Parker  
Chairman & CEO, American Airlines, Inc.



Scott Kirby  
CEO, United Airlines Holdings, Inc.



Sean Doyle  
CEO, British Airways



Shai Weiss  
CEO, Virgin Atlantic



Ed Bastian  
CEO, Delta Air Lines



Nicholas E. Calio  
President & CEO, Airlines for America



Robin Hayes  
CEO, JetBlue Airways Corp.

cc: The Honorable Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State  
The Rt. Hon. Dominic Raab MP, UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services  
The Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP, UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Professor Yvonne Doyle CB, Medical Director and Director of UK Health Protection, PHE  
The Honorable Jeffrey Zients, U.S. White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, UK Minister for the Cabinet Office