

BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport Welcomes International Air Service from Southwest Airlines

Airline Offers First-Ever International Flights

This morning at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, Southwest Airlines launched its first-ever scheduled international flights. Starting today, Southwest provides nonstop service between BWI Marshall and three international markets: Aruba, Montego Bay, and Nassau. The routes shifted today to Southwest from AirTran Airways, a subsidiary of Southwest.

“Today, we celebrate an exciting new chapter in the long shared history between the State of Maryland and Southwest Airlines,” said Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley. “For more than two decades, Southwest has provided convenient, affordable air service for millions of travelers at BWI Marshall Airport. Thanks to the passage of the Transportation Investment Act and significant growth in international passenger traffic, that tradition of excellence will now include destinations beyond our borders.”

Southwest Airlines began service at BWI Marshall on September 15, 1993, with service to two destinations, Chicago Midway and Cleveland. Today, BWI Marshall is the third busiest airport in the Southwest system, and the largest on the east coast. In 2013, Southwest and its AirTran subsidiary flew 16.15 million passengers at BWI Marshall. The airline operates from 28 gates at the Airport. There are more than 3,000 local Southwest employees, according to the airline.

“With today’s announcement, we’re taking an important step forward in strengthening and improving BWI Marshall Airport, which is a vital economic engine for Maryland and the region,” said Lt. Governor Anthony Brown. “With these new international routes, Southwest Airlines will be able to continue its tradition of outstanding service at BWI Marshall, while providing more options for Maryland’s travelers.”

Later this year, Southwest will begin service on two additional international routes from BWI Marshall. In August, Southwest will assume international service to Cancun. In November, service between BWI Marshall and Punta Cana will shift to Southwest.

“At BWI Marshall, we are working to improve the travel product for our customers while enhancing air service opportunities for the airlines,” said Maryland Transportation Secretary James T. Smith, Jr. “These improvements will provide additional capacity for international air service.”

Last summer, Governor O’Malley announced a three-year, multi-phase development plan that would: construct a new secure connector between Concourse D and Concourse E, create a new security checkpoint to serve domestic and international travelers, and configure airline gates to support additional international flights. Design work on the D/E Connector program will be complete this summer, with construction expected to start in late 2014. This project is partially funded by the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013.

International passenger traffic has grown steadily in recent years at BWI Marshall. International passengers have increased by about 20 percent in each of the past two years. The number of international passengers using BWI Marshall has nearly doubled over the past five years. For early 2014, international passenger traffic has continued to increase by double-digits.

“The start of international service by Southwest Airlines today is an important first step,” said Paul J. Wiedefeld, Chief Executive Officer for BWI Marshall. “We look forward to working with Southwest in coming years as the airline grows its international product.”

###