

We would like to shed some light on how the company determines base staffing, how pairings are built, and how lines are constructed.

Scheduling begins from a systemwide perspective

The Unions role in the scheduling process is governed by Sections 30.L.1 and 30.L.2 of the Agreement.

Section 30.L.1 of the JCBA reads:

“The Company and the Union Central Schedule Committee will meet every month or more frequently if necessary. The purpose of these meetings will be to review flying assigned to and lines constructed for both domestic and international flying.”

The process begins with the Central Schedule Committee (CSC) which is a comprised of Flight Attendants elected by the membership through the Union’s leadership. They meet with the company monthly to discuss how the company has chosen to allocate its manpower and to review the pairings they have built.

It’s important to understand: **the company builds the pairings.**

In addition to checking for contractual compliance, CSC frequently makes recommendations for changes, although these are only sometimes successful since the company is laser focused on cost. The company uses a computer program called an “optimizer” to produce the pairings which has several purposes:

- to increase Flight Attendant Block Hours per duty day.
- to reduce time away from home.
- to fly as few multi-day trips as possible
- to save hotel costs by decreasing layovers in expensive cities.

All of these variables are done on a systemwide basis with the aim to have as few Flight Attendants as possible, flying as productively as possible, at the lowest cost possible, within the parameters of the agreement.

Notice how we said “systemwide basis”

This is where manpower planning comes in. Scheduling at United is in constant flux with some markets growing faster than others, and aircraft are needed to be deployed to capture this demand. Network Planning, another department within United, shifts the aircraft to respond to these market changes and then the schedule is passed to Advanced Schedule Planning. It is then that the “optimizer” tries to build the most cost-effective schedule for the month given the current base populations. In order to address this changing demand across its network, United processes transfers to where it needs Flight Attendants to fly the schedule more cost effectively. For example, given the bounce back from Covid-19, leisure demand is growing much more rapidly than business travel which is caused a need for transfers into many locations and eventually new hires; Newark’s International flying is rebounding to summer leisure spots in Europe (Lisbon, Spain, and Italy), Honolulu is in demand as it is a leisure destination in its own right and doesn’t require international travel, and Denver is the fastest growing connecting hub in the network. Conversely, San Francisco has had a slower path back to normal due to lack of demand in international business markets.

While the company tries to move Flight Attendants around to the bases where it feels it needs them, in the short term the flying must be moved to meet the parameters of the agreement. While flying may naturally fall in one location, if another base is “overstaffed” (perhaps due to short term constraints such as the current lack of demand in international markets), then it must pick up block hours by transitioning through another base as part of a multi-day pairing. Yet moving people and flying are not the only two tools at the company’s disposal; they have vast control over the line averages to address their base populations.

While the company would love to have fewer Flight Attendants cover more flying, and when demand normally increases [such as traditionally during the summer months and December], we do see that line averages increase. Yet, with the full rebound in travel not yet materializing, as well as the continued focus on right sizing the reserve pools, the company usually requires more line-holders as they do not want reserves to fly less than the seventy-eight hours (78:00) guaranteed under Section 3.O of the Agreement. In fact, they have been utilizing Section 8.I.1.J of the JCBA in an effort to further reduce this cost which states:

“At its discretion, the company may build Reserve lines with up to sixteen (16) calendar days off in a month, subject to a proportionate reduction in guarantee.”

Work at the Local Schedule Committee Level

Now that the company has determined the system best flown flying, and its computer program has built the pairings, it must determine how much each Flight Attendant in the base should fly. Typically, the line recommendations constructed by the Local Schedule Committees are governed by Section 7.A.1 which states:

“Except as provided in Paragraph G.1 below, all flying assigned to each Base shall be shown in lines of flying and posted for bid. The company shall not be required to make up lines of flying equal to less than seventy-one (71) hours.”

This is typically the minimum line value, although in order to reduce the number of reserves, and thus the amount of reserve under guarantee, the company has in the past required (with conditions which will be described below shortly) that lines be built below the seventy-one (71) hours. Notice how it doesn’t say lines can’t be built below, but rather the company simply isn’t required to accept them below that threshold. Instead, they have been relying on the parameters of Section 7.A.3 which states:

“Lines of flying shall be constructed so that the average of all lines at each Base is not less than sixty-nine (69) hours.”

Section 7.A.3 is our contractual protection to prevent part-time work and works in conjunction with Section 4.C of the agreement which states:

“A Flight Attendant awarded any line with less than seventy-one hours (71:00) original flight time line projection will be pay protected up to seventy-one hours (71:00).”

As pointed out above, a major factor in determining line average and the number of lines built are how much the reserves are flying.

Low line averages present difficulties in how your Local Schedule Committee builds the recommendations sent into the company. We take our direction from you, the membership, but we must submit recommendations that are contractually compliant as well as meeting the targets established by the company

To understand the line construction process, it is also essential to understand what pairings your Local Schedule Committee has to work with. For Los Angeles, to build the International FIVES, we only have Sydney and Narita to work with. When Narita only flew a few times a week it presented greater challenges. Mathematically, to meet the number of lines the company wants, it at times requires:

- 1) Having fewer trips per line
- 2) Mixing the flying
- 3) Changing the desired days of the week flown as well as positions.

Let's start with #1. Sydney is worth 28:25. Two (2) trips per line is worth 56:50, or not enough hours to comply with the seventy-one (71:00) outlined in 7.A.1. Yet if you add another Sydney, three (3) are worth 85:15; this is way too much time for the overall line average. Simply put, for every hour over the line average you build you need to build another line somewhere else by an hour; one Sydney line @ 85:15 with a case average of 73:32 requires you to “save” 11:43 somewhere else. Yet you only have Sydney and Narita in this case, so how are you going to do that? You would have to build a line with just two (2) Sydney's @ 56:50 to get a savings of 16:42, yet the company isn't required to accept lines below seventy-one (71) unless they agree to it!

Now let's look at number two (2): mixing the flying. This is best illustrated by looking at the Narita trip. Remember when Los Angeles was flying a three (3), four (4), and five (5) day Narita trip worth 21:25, 21:25, and 28:01 respectively. When trying to build lines, the Local Schedule Committees are guided by Sections 7.A.4 and 7.A.5 which states that priority will be given to “pure” lines of flying. So, we start by trying to build Narita's all on Tuesday. Well, if the trip is worth 21:35, three (3) equal 64:45 which is too low line value, and four (4) equal's 86:10 which is too high as we discussed above. So our next step is to combine the Narita five day with the (2) Narita's working on Tuesday since the Narita five day is worth more. In this case the two (2) Narita's on Tuesday give us 42:50, and when you add a five (5) day Narita to the line worth 28:01 you get 70:51 ***which is still too short.*** In the case of the August 2021 recommendations, it was the preference of the Local Schedule Committee to submit these recommendations, but the company was unwilling to accept them; they required that two (2) Narita's and a Sydney be placed into a line of flying to bring the line above the contractual minimum as outlined in the JCBA under 7.A.1.

And this brings us to number three (3): changing the desired days of the week. Given the focus on maximizing the line-holder counts while reducing the number of lines under seventy-one (71), the Local Schedule Committee will sometimes have to mix the desired days of the week. In the case of Narita, the trip used to operate on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays. If the company isn't willing to accept pure

Narita lines, and they must be mixed with Sydney as that is the only other international trip in the base, then that will cause the Sydney patterns to be altered since there simply are not enough Sydney's on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays to fix all the Narita's AND leave Sydney pure. This is especially pronounced in the single positions since Narita is missing the 6100/6200 positions as they are isolated in the language flying. Now that Narita is daily, it makes the building of lines easier.

All of these variables can be seen in domestic as well. Take our high time turns for example; what is the committee supposed to do when the company gives us increased service to Maui as well as launching service to Cozumel and Belize only on Saturday? With four (4) Saturdays in the month, and these trips worth roughly eleven hours (11:00), that only leaves forty-four-hour lines (44:00); something has to be paired with these high value turns (HVT) and due to minimum rest of twelve hours (12:00) at home per Section 6.V.1 of the Agreement, it becomes difficult to place anything back-to-back with these pairings. Typically, the preference is to place more HVT's here, yet seven (7) eleven-hour (11:00) turns creates seventy-seven-hour (77:00) lines, which are way too high when the company demands lower line averages. So what is the solution? One path forward is to build six (6) at sixty-six (66) hours with a low value turn to create a seventy-one (71:00) hour line. Yet this option is limited as well, especially as the number of Saturday only frequencies increase; simply put, not all the HVTs can be built Monday/Wednesday, Tuesday/Thursday, Friday/Sunday with the Saturdays mixed since we have so many Saturdays to fix. So another option is to mix the turns so that you are flying four (4) HVT's and four (4) medium value turns (such as ORD), but all operating the same days of the week (such as Tuesday and Thursday) to ensure the quality of the line while meeting the line average.

And that's just the turns... Based on your feedback, and consistent with the agreement, we strive to keep the turns with turns, two (2) days with two (2) days, all night flying with all night flying, Hawaii with Hawaii, and the Multi-day trips starting the same day of the week. Within all of those "buckets" we aim to also build a variety while keeping the flying pure, such as the two (2) days where we build some back-to-back and some (such as the high time Florida trips through Newark) just working a single trip a week.

In summation

We hope that this has proven illustrative, but we understand if you have questions. Our goal is to remain as transparent as possible. As such, we remain available should you want to reach out further. As you can see, scheduling at United is in constant flux with many moving parts and the Union's Local Schedule Committee's function is to take the feedback of the membership and try to construct recommendations based on that which are consistent with the agreement, and which meet the targets and parameters established by the company. It is no easy task, but very rewarding and intellectually stimulating. If you would like to volunteer and give back to your fellow peers, we are host an annual training it's your opportunity not only to give back, but to learn and become part of the process.