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AIR TRANSPORT WORLD

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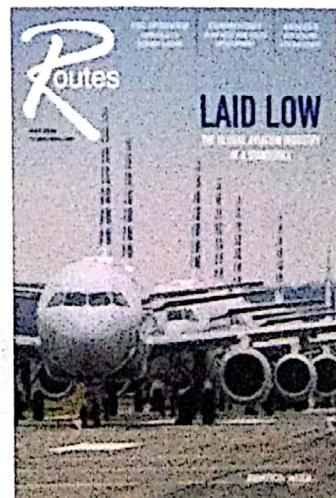


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# Editorial



**Karen Walker** | Editor-in-Chief  
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## The Restart

**T**here remain many unanswered questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic's long-term effects on society, trade and the global air transport industry.

How the air transport industry ultimately "restarts" and climbs out of this catastrophic event is, for now, one of the many unanswered questions. But already, there are clues.

It will be gradual. The timing will vary, region by region, depending on when, where and how severely the virus struck. Domestic markets will likely pick up more quickly than international. Leisure air travel might be stronger than business travel (though none will be strong) if people are eager to get out of lockdown and resume their delayed vacations, weddings and family reunions. But they will only do so if they still have the financial means and feel air travel is safe.

We know the global recession will likely hurt the air transport industry even more than the global grounding of most passenger fleets. There will be eye-watering fare wars, some of them disastrous for those that survive the pandemic but do not have the unit costs to stay competitive.

But most of all, this industry should expect new rules. Just as 9/11 has left commercial air service with screening and security rules that remain in place two decades later, so the pandemic will likely inflict potentially permanent directives on sanitizing, personal spacing, and health monitoring of passengers, flight crews and ground

staff. How this will be achieved without massive operational disruption is another unanswered question. But it will only work if standards are global, consistent and harmonized. Unilateral rules will simply pile chaos on top of acute distress.

And there will, inevitably, be some level of reregulation as airlines restructure. Government financial support for airlines and the air transport system has varied widely around the world. But nowhere in the world is that aid a bailout. It is an acknowledgement that sustaining a country's air transport system through this crisis is in its national interest. The quicker a country restores its air connectivity, the sooner it can reinstate jobs, stimulate trade and tourism, and stabilize its economy.

Look to Singapore for a fine example of such a vision (*page 15*). Singapore has moved rapidly to preserve what it has long regarded as an important and strategic asset tied directly to its economic growth. The US also moved quickly to provide its airlines financial assistance, but the world's largest aviation market still needs a national aviation vision, as Kevin Mitchell sets out in our analysis (*page 20*).

The pandemic has been devastating. The restart will be even harder. But a stronger air transport industry will emerge if the restart is both globally collaborative and based on a realization that air connectivity is a nation's best chance of getting back in the game. **ATW**





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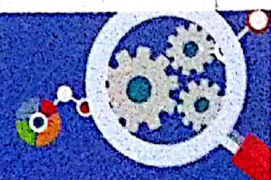
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