

The Virgin Islands Consortium

American And United Airlines Upbeat About Travel To USVI, Tourism Says; United Preparing Daily Nonstop Summer Flights To Charlotte Amalie

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Demand for travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands is surging, the Department of Tourism said on Tuesday, department officials, chief among them Commissioner Nominee Joseph Boschulte, met with airline officials on the mainland last week.

After talks with United Airlines in Chicago and American Airlines in Dallas respectively, Mr. Boschulte said there has been strong demand for seats to the territory's airports on St. Thomas and St. Croix this past winter season, which is likely to result in additional capacity this winter season as well as the following summer, D.O.T. said.

In fact, according to the release, Mr. Boschulte reported that United Airlines was preparing to launch daily nonstop Houston-St. Thomas service for this summer and would also consider plans for new and additional flights to St. Thomas and St. Croix the following summer, especially with the increased business from the oil refinery on St. Croix and as additional hotel rooms become available.



D.O.T. Commissioner Designee Joseph Boschulte (center) with (from left) American Airlines' (AA) Alex McIntyre and Kyle Holden at AA Headquarters in Dallas last week.

"We have had some very important discussions about the future of airlift to the Territory and look forward to following up with our airline partners to ensure that we have adequate flights into our islands, especially as more accommodations come on line in the months ahead," said Mr. Boschulte, who noted that United had already loaded new Saturday flights between Chicago and St. Thomas before the coming winter season.

His meeting with American Airlines at its Dallas headquarters was also positive with the airline reporting robust growth in demand to the destination. Under consideration for American, the commissioner designee disclosed, was increased capacity from Chicago, Dallas and Miami in the coming months, and potential for growth out of the Charlotte hub

in the future, benefiting both airports in the territory.



D.O.T. Commissioner Designee Joseph Boschulte (right) with journalist Maudlyne Ihejirika of the Chicago Sun-Times.

While in Chicago and Dallas, Mr. Boschulte also met with travel agents, meeting planners, travel writers, social influencers and community leaders to update them on the territory's recovery, as well as to develop smart partnerships, according to the release.

"These meetings matter as we embark on a managed growth strategy through the full return of land-based tourism following the storms of 2017," he said. "The travel and tourism sector is changing to meet its growth and is becoming more electronic and

internet-based, but ironically, the more virtual it gets, the more important it is to regularly meet face-to-face with our partners," Commissioner Designee Boschulte explained. The Commissioner Designee and his team are working on new opportunities presented by last week's meetings and presentations.

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