

March 2019 Volume 17, number 1

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Major shifts in the former Japanese network

Soviets, solar cells, and Sonny & Cher: when the world came to Spokane

Center spread: On the wings of children's dreams: the WorldPlane

Our Mission:

To preserve and display the memory of Northwest Airlines' colorful history.

To tell the stories of carriers merged and allied with NWA, and the stations and regions they served.

To show how the legacy of NWA carries on into the future.

Reflections

The Quarterly Journal of the Northwest Airlines History Center

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In the post-deregulation era, seeing multiple 747s at Minneapolis/St. Paul was rare, until local tourism demand and the network effects of the Republic merger began to manifest. *Image by author.*

A 'New' Transpacific Gateway

Before the WorldHub, there were the "Mall of America flights" --by Scott Norris

Part 1: Building the Demand

Minnesota's economy had always counted on tourism; as soon as the riverboats and railroads had arrived, resorts and vacation properties opened to take advantage of the state's many lakes and forests, clean air, four-season outdoor activities, and peaceful quiet. Even into the 1980s, most tourists to the North came by automobile from nearby states; while Minnesotans love to travel abroad and to overwinter in 'snowbird' destinations, the perception of the state as an icy tundra by people on the coasts and in the South made it difficult to attract more inbound visitors from beyond the Midwest.

Those who did make it "up north" discovered Minnesota had world-class cultural venues like the Guthrie Theater, Minnesota Orchestra, and Minneapolis Institute of Art; extensive lake-country resorts like Lutsen, Grand View Lodge, Madden's, and Breezy Point (as discussed in the June 2018 REFLECTIONS); big casinos on Native lands; sports – not just the Vikings, Twins, and Timberwolves but also youth soccer and hockey everywhere; excellent zoos; top-notch universities; a good-sized amusement park; parklands everywhere; and excellent shopping … but the state lacked one "iconic attraction" that everyone coming through would need to see.

With the construction of the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis, and hockey's North Stars relocating to Dallas, the suburb of Bloomington suddenly had several square miles of prime real estate no longer needed for sports stadiums – right at the corner of two major freeways, and literally at the edge of the airport.

MSP's First Transpacific Nonstops: to page 8

www.northwe stair line shistory. org

Flight Plan



From the Executive Director

The Northwest Airlines History Center (NWAHC) has made its stage debut. From both newspaper reviews and comments from people who attended, we were marvelous! The History Theatre, in St. Paul, staged the play "Stewardess", based on the groundbreaking sex and job discrimination lawsuit filed by (then termed) Stewardess Mary Pat Laffey against Northwest Airlines.

The History Theatre contacted the NWAHC in January asking for assistance in setting an airline industry mood and to provide background to Mary Pat's case in the theatre lobby. They visited the archive at Flying Cloud to see some of the items and work with Flo Dreyer in selecting three F/A uniforms for display. I also made two trips to the History Theatre bringing paper items for them to scan the results were terrific! They enlarged articles from Northwest's employee newspaper "Passages", plus other articles we have relating to Stewardesses, and used them in a display highlighting what it was like to work for Northwest Orient Airlines (and all airlines) in the 1960s and how that glamour was

presented to, and perceived by, the public.



There were a fair number of former flight attendants in the audience the evening I attended. Judging from the conversations I overheard in the inner lobby before the play and during intermission, many of conversations were first person experiences. As interesting were the responses of younger women as they read some of the "job qualifications" in the articles on display.(airmail) collection.

---> next page

Have items you'd be interested in donating to the NWAHC? Please contact Bruce at bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org with details of

your items, photos if possible, and how we can reach you.



Now, shopping on Amazon helps the NWAHC! 0.5% of every sale is contributed when you shop via this link: smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2020975

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We are an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the State of Minnesota.

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Our ability to support the telling of our shared airline history through our museum, and in supporting other organizations, is only possible because of you – and others – who believe history is important, especially the airline history we created. Whether you support us by being a paid member or by donating items, we couldn't be that historic resource without you The NWAHC is the steward, but you are the lifeblood. Thank you for giving the NWAHC the ability to do this.

I am pleased to report that we are partners with the University of St. Catherine for the 2019 spring semester. Two MLIS archive students will work on cataloging a donation of flown covers and accession them into our aerophilately (airmail) collection.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to work on the NWAHC's acceptance speech for the Obie Award we're no doubt going to be recommended for! CAVU.

Preflight Briefing









There's nothing that scares an author or editor more than a blank sheet of paper, and as I plan out the upcoming year of REFLECTIONS it helps me to identify key events through history to find the Northwest story angle. Thankfully, 2019 is chock-full of auspicious anniversaries that will get many pages of coverage in upcoming issues: the 40th year since the Republic merger; the 70th year since Southern's founding; the 90th birthday of the Memphis airport; and even the 100th birthday of KLM. I've crafted commemorative logos to honor RC and SO in the next several issues.

It's also Delta's 90th birthday this year, and coverage of their actions with the legacy Northwest Asian route network will also be on the agenda. I recently had the pleasure of visiting "backstage" at the Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta to meet their professional archivists, conservationists, and storytellers. They take their work seriously, and honor the materials sent down from Eagan during the merger. I hope to have many chances to collaborate with them in the future!

Another anniversary bringing Hughes Airwest and Northwest Orient together is the 45th year since the World's Fair in Spokane. You'll find a sampling of both airlines' materials on page 5. RW promoted Expo '74 heavily, and I'll be posting scans of those ads, entertainment schedules , and historical links on our blog at northwestairlineshistory.org.

Also check the blog for more photos and scans of the 747-400 WorldPlane, shown in our center spread in this issue. With Delta starting Minneapolis-Seoul flights in April, showing the history of NW's earlier nonstops from MSP to Asia was an easy cover story choice.

All the pages are now filled out! Cross-check and prepare for departure. --Scott

VISITING THE MUSEUM

Current schedule:

Wednesday - Thursday	11 am - 6 pm
Friday-Saturday	11 am - 5 pm
Closed Sunday-Tuesday, and major holidays.	

Admission is FREE

(Special events may incur a charge.)

Directions:

FROM MSP INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT:

Use the Metro Blue Line light rail from either Terminal 1 or Terminal 2. Take the southbound train (towards the Mall of America) and exit at the American Boulevard station, which is the stop immediately beyond Terminal 2. The Crowne Plaza Aire Hotel is immediately east, across the street from the station. Trains run every 10 minutes and fares are \$2.50 peak / \$2.00 off-peak. A ticket is good for 2.5 hours of unlimited travel, so depending on the length of your visit to the museum, a separate return ticket may not be necesary.

FROM THE TWIN CITIES METRO AREA:

Head toward MSP International Airport. From I-494, get off at the 34th Ave. S. exit (second exit east of Hwy 77/Cedar) Go south on 34th Ave. S. for one block to American Blvd. Turn left onto American Blvd. Crowne Plaza Aire Hotel is on your right. Free parking is available on the top two floors of

The museum is on the third floor, across from the Fitness Center.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

the hotel's ramp.

\$30 level - receives the REFLECTIONS digital edition early access via email

\$35 level - receives the REFLECTIONS print edition via U.S. Postal Service. (Be sure to give us your email address if you'd also like the early online access.)

Reflections, March 2019

Compass Readings

Major changes enroute for former NWA Japan network

FUKUOKA EXIT:

Northwest started service to the largest city on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu in August 1991 with 727-200 nonstops to Guam, and in December 1992 added a daily DC-10 nonstop to Honolulu. While the Guam link would be cut in early 1993, the HNL flight was maintained up to 1998 but the vacation-dependent service did not survive the Pacific economic crisis (like other routes described in this issue's feature article.)



"redlegsfan", via Flickr, CC. 2.0 license

In September 2011, Delta re-started the route using 767-300ER equipment and was the only carrier on the city pair. However, with DL needing 767s for higher-yield traffic; in this case the resumption of Seattle-Osaka service, the flight will again be cancelled as of May 7, 2019.

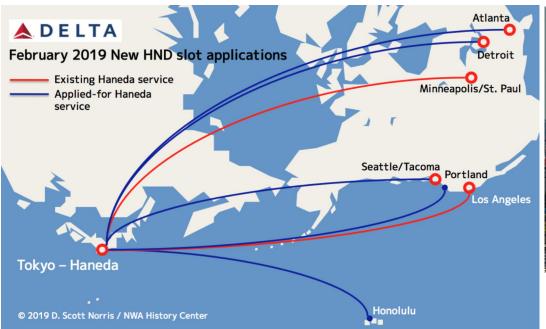




Photo from June 2015 at Haneda by Yoshikazu Tokada, via Flickr, CC. 2.0 license

TOKYO-HANEDA SLOTS:

In preparation for the 2020 Summer Olympics, and because of new flight paths around the US Air Force base at Yokota, the Japanese government announced it would make 24 new daytime slot pairs available for US-Japan service at Tokyo's "downtown" Haneda airport: 12 to US carriers and 12 to Japanese carriers. On February 21, 2019, American, United, Hawaiian, and Delta submitted requests to the US Department of Transportation for a total of 19 proposed flights.

Delta asked for single daily frequencies from its DTW, ATL, and SEA hubs, plus PDX, as well as a double-daily pair for HNL. This would add to existing daily service from MSP and LAX. If granted in full, DL would discontinue all service at Tokyo-Narita, including its remaining "beyond-Japan" flights to Manila and Singapore, resulting in the closure of those stations as well.

USDOT decisions are expected sometime in Summer 2019. As all 12 of the Japanese-side flights will go to incumbent carriers All Nippon (joint-venture partner with United) and Japan Airlines (JV partner with American, with a separate JV application in for Hawaiian), the US decisions may heavily favor Delta, since the other three carriers will in all likelihood get frequencies they want at their main hubs in any case.

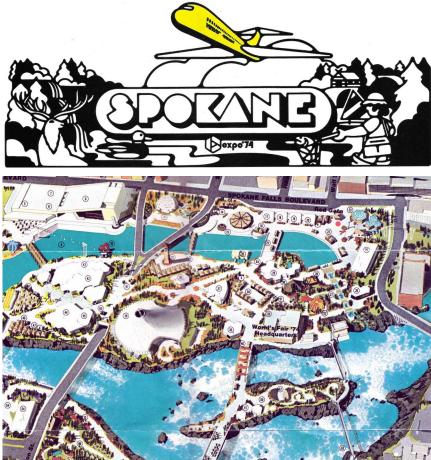
As USDOT made their announcement for new HND slot availability, they also denied a request by Delta for "portability" of existing slots, a move widely seen as a bid to move its existing Minneapolis service to another hub. Therefore the MSP-HND routing is expected to remain in place.

45th Anniversary of expo '74 -Spokane's riverfront reinvention

In the 1950s, city leaders in Spokane came to the realization that their downtown core had become unlivable and unworkable due to industrial pollution, poorly used warehouses, and a knot of railroad trestles and yards that choked air, water, and traffic. Yet citizens voted down bond and tax proposals to pay for redevelopment measures in the early 1960s. A grassroots effort had better success during the '60s at re-framing the issues around public space and quality of life, yet figuring out how to pay the railroads to leave and reclaim the river and its falls for parkland was still a dilemma.

Everyone involved realized that thinking small would never yield enough funds for success - advice from colleagues in Seattle who'd put on the 1962 World's Fair led Spokane to place an audacious bid for their own Fair which could reboot downtown and pay for it with tourism.

With a theme of environmental renewal, the city's bid was approved in 1971 for the 1974 Fair season, and funding was obtained from Washington State, the US Government, and local tourism taxes. A mad scramble ensued to prepare the site, but it opened complete on May 4, 1974.



"Bird's eye" southbound-looking overview of Riverview Park, from the official Expo map. The Northwest Orient junk can be seen in the upper left, floating in the retaining pond. Gondola-car riders would pass just above it. Hughes Airwest's booth was center-right in this view, near the Headquarters building.

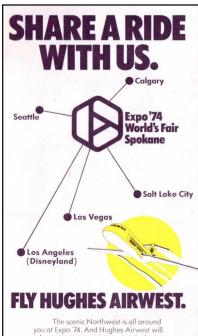
Hughes Airwest made the winning bid for airline sponsorship rights, and its traffic pattern was a solid

match with the origins of those who attended: about half from Washington State, with much of the balance from California, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Canada. RW ran 12 departures from GEG that summer, including 2 daily nonstops to Las Vegas (both continuing to Los Angeles), 2 to Calgary, and 4

to Seattle. While Hughes did promote the Fair heavily, they did not add flights or upgauge aircraft.

Northwest Orient brought over a classic Hong Kong junk and parked it outside the Republic of China

(Taiwan) exhibit hall. NW fielded 20 nonstops from GEG that summer, including 7 to Seattle, 3 to Minneapolis, 3 to Portland, 6 into Montana, and 1 to Chicago. NW had 3 DC-10 departures from GEG,





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Click on the "blog" tab of www.northwestairlineshistory.org for entertainment schedules, more examples of Hughes Airwest advertising, and other historical links to learn more about Expo '74.

but this also was similar to their service pattern before and after the Fair.



Reflections, March 2019

Center Spread: As part of NWA's 50th anniversary of Transpacific operations, an art contest for kids of ages 5 to 12 was held in 10 Asia-Pacific and 9 US cities, looking for festivals, traditions, landmarks, and icons of their hometowns. 95 entries were narrowed to 19 artworks that 3M turned into giant decals.



Large-scale model of the WorldPlane (along with many of her sister ships!) on display at the Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta

N670US received the special livery in February 1997 and made her debut on the MSP-Narita run on March 12th, eventually making her way to all 747 stations worldwide. After a year she was repainted into standard colors. Concluding 27 years with Northwest and Delta, she was retired in December 2017.



Osaka (Keiko Terasaka, 10)

Detroit (Sarah Maesch, 10)

Minneapolis (Sheena Sood, 12)

Feature Article

Right: the Mall of America directly abuts the flight path to MSP's Runway 17/35, and the old Republic hangar is easily visible from its North Food Court (a great place for spotting aircraft).

Below: the MOA's indoor amusement park is popular and comfortable year-round, with acres of living plants and pleasant humidity. It will be joined with a massive water park in the mid-2020s, so families will easily be able to vacation several days without ever needing to leave the complex.

Source: author's photos



The MOA offers a full cultural and activity calendar throughout the year. *Source: author's photos*







Debates raged through the 1980s about what to do with the property, but in the end a company called Triple Five, who had developed the giant West Edmonton Mall in Canada, was tapped to develop at the time would be America's largest shopping center.

In August 1992, the Mall of America opened, and Minnesota had its must-see equivalent to the Golden Gate Bridge or Times Square. With a compact but fullfeatured amusement park in the center, mini-golf course, movie theater, aquarium, four anchor department stores on the corners, and three full rings of stores around the sides, it was easy for families to spend a full day there, and its prime location made it an irresistible stopover for folks on cross-country drives or having long connections at the airport.

And despite predictions of its irrelevancy and predictions of failure, the MOA thrived by mixing entertainment with retail. In 2016 over 40 million visits were made there, and the complex has been remodeled and expanded, adding hotels and even an office tower, with additional expansion phases in the works.

With worldwide attention came the realization that food and clothing were quite affordable in Minnesota, and that the Twin Cities were packed with attractions and activities to easily fill a long weekend or even a full week's vacation. Northwest Airlines, the dominant carrier at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and an early sponsor of the Mall of America, offered domestic vacation packages which proved quite popular in the mid-to-late 1990s. This led to Northwest offering package tours to overseas visitors.

Part 2: Building the Hub

Even in the early 1950s, Northwest was running flights from MSP all the way out to Tokyo, but those were multi-stop flights and passengers had to clear Customs in West Coast cities. These through-flights came and went through the 1970s and 1980s (running through California, Hawaii, or Seattle), but after NWA's 1986 merger with Republic, they made Flight 7 (westbound) and Flight 8 (eastbound) a daily 747 service via Seattle.

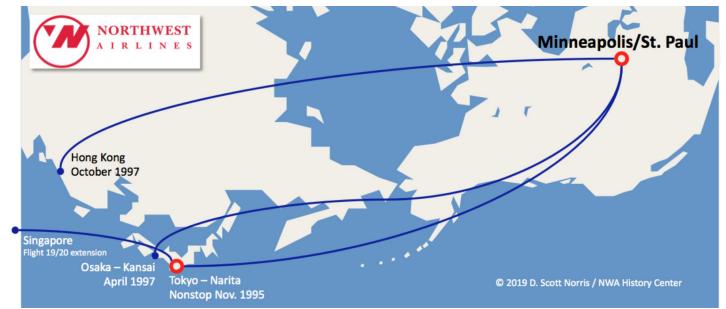
www.northwestairlineshistory.org

NWA had been running a Tokyo-Chicago nonstop since the 1970s and was reluctant to give up that prestige route, because if they did, surely United or American would pick up the lucrative Transpacific traffic from their respective O'Hare hubs. And United had become a serious competitive threat, after buying Pan Am's Pacific routes. (See my article on weninchina.com for more detail: bit.ly/UAPA1986)

Of course, United's connecting power at ORD and corporate contracts in Chicagoland were two elements that Northwest knew they could not overcome. But as the company finally integrated Republic's fleet and staff, it added connecting banks at MSP to better compete with the Chicago hubs. For instance, in 1988 St. Louis was served by 4 daily nonstops but in 1994 there were six. And Indianapolis went from 3 flights to 5. MSP was becoming a true "fortress hub".

After the Mall of America opened and had started demonstrating its ability to draw tourists from beyond the Midwest – and with the construction of a dedicated Customs facility in the main terminal of MSP Airport – the time had come for Northwest to combine two of its strongest network elements and finally begin nonstops to Asia.

This would allow Northwest to offer package tours to shoppers and families with the promise of not having to connect from international to domestic flights in confusing Los Angeles or San Francisco, with a quick and easy Customs line and short light-rail hop from the MSP Airport to the Mall of America.



Part 3: The flights

From November 1995, Northwest started a Saturday-only nonstop in both directions to its Tokyo hub, supplementing Flights 7/8 via Seattle. Westbound, this was Flight 19, leaving MSP at 1:30 pm and arriving Narita at 5:05 pm Sunday. Eastbound, Flight 20 left Narita at 3:05 pm and arrived MSP at 1:00 pm the same day.

By September 1996, it was clear this service had met its objectives as Northwest increased its frequency to three nonstops per week, and finally to daily by December 1996. Flights 19/20 were also extended out to Singapore, allowing same-plane service from Minnesota all the way to Southeast Asia.

1997 was Northwest's 50th anniversary of service to Asia, and they made a big celebration of it across their system with banners, parties, and special aircraft paint schemes. They started service to Mumbai and Delhi in India, and they also added two more Transpacific flights out of Minneapolis:

Osaka nonstops began in April 1997 with 3-per-week service, using Boeing 747-200 equipment. Westbound, this was Flight 95, departing MSP at 9:20 am and landing at Kansai Airport 1:40 pm the next day. Eastbound, Flight 24 left at 1:50 pm and arrived MSP at 11:45 am the same day.





And finally, nonstops to Hong Kong (the longest route in their system at that time), using a brand-new 747-400, began in October 1997, again with 3-per-week service. Westbound Flight 97 left MSP at 12:45 pm, arriving HKG at 5:15 pm the next day. Eastbound Flight 98 departed Hong Kong at 10:00 am and arrived MSP at 10:30 am the same day. As exciting and groundbreaking as these services were, however, they would not last.

Part 4: Better Opportunities Elsewhere, and Japanese Disappointment

The routes ended not because of any decline in the popularity of the Mall of America, or any general decline in the economy: this was still before the events of 9/11/01, and business and tourism in the US was thriving. Rather, it was the success Northwest was having from its long-term investments that caused these routes to be cut, plus planning for the airline's future, and deploying its assets where it could earn the best return:

Northwest's giant new terminal at Detroit was nearing completion and would open in early 2002 – a milelong concourse, purpose-built to funnel Asian and European jumbo-jet traffic efficiently and at low cost onto short-haul hops to the major population centers of the Great Lakes and Northeast USA. MSP could only handle a handful of DC-10 and 747 arrivals, whereas DTW tackled a dozen at one time, if need be.



Here's 747-400 N670US again, out of her WorldPlane livery and into the standard "Bowling Shoe" colors, with "The Alliance Spirit" titles. Source: Paul Spijkers via Wikimedia Commons, GFDL 1.2 license

Brand-new Boeing 747-400s were coming fully on stream: they truly excelled at long-haul flying; the
farther the better. And they were exceptional at lifting belly cargo – where Northwest earned excellent
returns serving the auto industry around Detroit. MSP did not have the depth of nearby cargo customers.
747-400s started replacing the older, fully-depreciated but less fuel-efficient and more maintenanceintensive 747-200s. NWA decided not to invest in upgrading its -200 fleet and actually started retiring
some. Without up-to-date seating (especially in the front of the cabin) and electronics, the -200s were
eventually relegated to routes that did not have heavy premium traffic: tourist-heavy runs between Japan
and Hawaii.

So Northwest's fleet plan, real estate investments, and crucial freight business were optimized around Detroit. NWA wanted to put new long-haul aircraft on routes that could sell lots of high-fare seats and full containers of cargo, because those two elements were key to profit. People taking shopping trips were numerous, but weren't the kind of customers who would buy high-profit-margin World Business Class fares.

There were other factors, as well:

The Hong Kong route ended by November 1998: that city's new airport had just opened in July of that year, and was still having teething troubles which made life difficult and unpredictable for all carriers, but especially those with only one or two daily flights. NWA's daily morning departure to Tokyo from Hong Kong at 9 am did mean staff could be utilized for its 10 am, 3-day-a-week Minneapolis departure – but the arrival times could not have been more awkward: Tokyo landed at 10 pm, but Minneapolis pulled in at 5 pm, which meant NWA needed to schedule two different staff shifts. And it meant the aircraft handling the MSP run sat on the ground for seventeen hours! These two problems made cutting the route inevitable.



Source: Corey Barnes via Flickr, CC 2.0 license

Osaka had different circumstances: NWA attempted to create a mini-hub at that city's giant offshore Kansai Airport (KIX), adding nonstops from Los Angeles, Detroit, and Seattle to its existing service from Hawaii, and then adding Minneapolis. Northwest was by far the largest non-Japanese carrier at Kansai in the late 1990s – but it did not have extensive traffic rights to fly beyond Osaka to other markets like China, unlike its setup at Tokyo's Narita Airport. The only place NWA flew onward to from Osaka was Manila, Philippines – and while that city generated a lot of traffic to and from America, the country's poor economy meant its customers were traveling on heavily-discounted fares.

NWA did forge a code-share alliance with Japan Air System, that country's #3 domestic airline, which eventually saw NW flight numbers applied to runs from Osaka to key cities like Fukuoka and Sapporo. This could have become a more-significant partnership: Northwest had no ability to offer connections to other Japanese cities through Narita, but with JAS at Osaka, the entire country was available. Plus, JAS was planning for international expansion that could also have fed Northwest's flights to the USA.

That hope ended abruptly at the turn of the century when JAS decided its shareholders would get a better return by merging the company with another airline – and as Japanese law said only a Japanese company could own an airline, that meant either All Nippon Airways or Japan Air Lines (both fierce competitors against Northwest) would win the prize, with JAL eventually taking over JAS.

KIX's high aircraft handling costs did not help, and the massive slowdown in Japan's economy meant fewer tourists were interested in flying to America to buy clothes, food, and presents. Ultimately, NWA's Osaka strategy fell apart and the city was reconnected to Tokyo with single-aisle aircraft for connections and onward service to Guam. NWA ran MSP-KIX into October 1998, and brought it back for the summer in 1999 and 2000. The events of 9/11/01, and the JAL-JAS merger, ensured it would not ever be repeated. Service between Minneapolis and Tokyo-Narita, however, remained steady with a daily nonstop, and even went to double-daily in the mid-2000s. However, Northwest's bankruptcy in 2006 and merger with Delta in 2008 would bring changes...

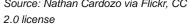
Part 5: A Rebirth?

De-hubbing the former Northwest complex at Tokyo-Narita was inevitable, but instead of cutting Transpacific links at MSP altogether, the frequency was moved to Tokyo-Haneda using 777-200s. Given the lack of SkyTeam onward links at HND, an aircaft with smaller capacity such as the 787-8 might have been a better fit, but Delta cancelled the Northwest order for those.

Approval of the Delta-Korean Air joint venture has led to DL starting MSP-Seoul Incheon nonstops from April 2019. With additional international gates now available at MSP, tight quarters in Seattle limiting expansion there, and continued strong profitable feed, Minneapolis is in good position to add more Asian flying: Delta's application for MSP-Shanghai Pudong to start in 2020 with A350s is a vote of confidence (and perhaps a defensive move against Japanese and Chinese carriers' recent aggressive route expansion.) Instead of having no Asian routes, Minneapolis is finally savoring its second bloom.



Source: Nathan Cardozo via Flickr, CC





Source: Contri via Flickr, CC 2.0 license



Yes, if we were playing "what if", this would be the ideal aircraft for MSP-HND...



A350 (above, *courtesy Delta*) and 777-200 equipment (*author's photo*) will power Asian service from MSP into the 2020s.

Reflections, March 2019



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expo'74 - a world in environmental crisis looks to Spokane Travel back in time: from May 4 to November 3, 1974 along the renovated and cleaned downtown riverfront!

See our article on Page 5, and more on our blog







Image by clipperarctic - CC 2.0 license