

**SFO IATA Level 2 Designation
Background Paper
October 11, 2011**

- The FAA will designate San Francisco International Airport (SFO) as Level 2 under the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Worldwide Slot Guidelines. IATA Level 2 indicates there is a potential for congestion that could be managed by voluntary means. This will take effect for the summer season beginning March 25, 2012.
- Delays are already common at SFO. The airport often ranks near the bottom of on-time arrival performance, and current peak schedules are about 90% of optimum capacity. Delays may get worse if schedule peaks increase while the runway capacity decreases.
- The FAA is taking this step to address potential delays related to planned airfield construction. Starting in 2012 and continuing until 2015, major construction will be underway at SFO to extend the Runway Safety Areas (RSA) for each of the four runways. This will reduce the airport's runway capacity and has the potential to create delays.
- Level 2 is a voluntary process that allows the FAA to obtain schedule plans from carriers in advance, compare demand and capacity, and work with the airlines to voluntarily address any issues and reduce potential congestion and delays. Airlines will have the option of adjusting their schedules to eliminate demand peaks, or using larger aircraft to reduce the number of overall flights.
- The FAA has had success in working with carriers to voluntarily manage demand and capacity at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, which has been a Level 2 airport for the past few years.
- The FAA is establishing a task force to work with the carriers to identify and implement a range of efficiency measures to reduce delays at SFO during the construction.
- FAA is contacting major stakeholders and will publish a notice in the Federal Register on October 14, 2011.
- IATA Worldwide Slot Guidelines designates three levels of airport coordination:
 - Level 1 – The capacity of the airport infrastructure is generally adequate to meet the demands of airport users at all times.
 - Level 2 – There is potential for congestion during some periods of the day, week, or season, which can be resolved by voluntary cooperation.
 - Level 3 – Demand significantly exceeds the airport's capacity, expansion of airport infrastructure to meet demand is not possible in the short term, and attempts to resolve the problem through voluntary schedule adjustments have failed or are ineffective. As a result, a process of slot allocation is required whereby a slot is required to operate at the airport.