

TRAVEL WEEKLY

THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S MOST VOICED

A NEW VERTICAL FOR AIRLINES

Major carriers are placing bets on a future where travelers use small, fast, emission-free aircraft to bypass congested roadways on their way to the airport.

BY ROBERT SILK

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Airlines retire their smallest planes, raising concerns for regional markets

By Robert Silk

United's late June announcement that it will pare down its fleet of 50-seat aircraft by approximately 200 by 2026 continues a long-term trend by U.S. airlines away from 50-seat service.

But how will small cities be impacted as airlines increasingly upgauge their smaller, regional jets for 76-seat aircraft?

The answer, said Faye Malarkey Black, CEO of the Regional Airline Association (RAA), will depend upon the city.

"When upgauging happens because of market characteristics and demand, that is a good thing," Black said.

But she added that some communities are best served by smaller jets. So if airlines move to large planes for secondary reasons, including to drive down costs or to stay compliant with union contract clauses — known as scope clauses — that cap regional aircraft fleet sizes, the results are often problematic. Negative outcomes for small markets include losing frequencies, routes or, in the worst cases, air service entirely.

According to data compiled by the RAA, between 2008 and 2020 the number of 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft flown by U.S. carriers declined by more than 60%, as airlines increased their flying in dual-class. See **REGIONAL JETS** on Page 26

AN ANTICIPATED SHIP MAKES ITS DEBUT

Onboard Carnival's Mardi Gras: A bigger, better type of Fun Ship

By Tom Strieghorst

ABOARD THE MARDI GRAS — Let's be clear: This isn't the Carnival Mardi Gras, the ship that launched Carnival Cruise Line in 1972, but simply the Mardi Gras, a bigger and better kind of Fun Ship arriving on the eve of the line's 50th anniversary.



At 6,500 passengers and 180,000 gross tons, it's one of the biggest cruise ships to be launched during the pandemic. And with features ranging from the environmental (engines powered by liquefied natural gas) to the passenger (a roller coaster ringing the top deck) it's easily one of the most anticipated cruise ships of the year.

The Mardi Gras continues Carnival's evolution away from pop architecture toward less novelty and over-the-top zaniness in design. Still fun but not. See **MARDI GRAS** on Page 26

ON THE RECORD

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MARK PESTRONK

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