

Memorandum



Date: February 23, 2026

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(9)
May 5, 2026

To: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava *Daniella Levine Cava*
Mayor

Subject: First Quarterly Report on Direct Air Service between Miami International Airport (MIA) and Singapore, Tokyo, Riyadh, and Asuncion - Directive No. 252061

Executive Summary

This report is in response to Resolution No. R-1036-25 (Resolution), sponsored by Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins, and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on October 21, 2025. The Resolution directs the County Mayor or the County Mayor's designee to (i) determine the feasibility of establishing direct passenger or cargo air service between MIA and Singapore, Tokyo, Riyadh, and Asunción, and if feasible, solicit the routes from the appropriate airline carriers, potentially in coordination with the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Beacon Council, and (ii) place a quarterly report on a Board agenda, subject to committee review, providing an update on the efforts taken to provide such air service, any outreach to airline carriers, or changes in feasibility. The Resolution also instructed the International Trade Consortium (ITC), among other things, (i) to the extent feasible, negotiate and prepare Sister Cities Agreements and transmit those agreements to the County Mayor or County Mayor's designee for execution, and (ii) to provide a separate report to the Board regarding the status of the negotiations. ITC has indicated that a separate report will be placed on a Board agenda in response to the resolution.

After extensive discussions with multiple carriers during the Routes World Conferences held on October 15–17, 2023, and October 4–8, 2024, as well as follow-up meetings with American Airlines on May 13 and October 14, 2025, and additional consultations with government officials, it has been determined that long-haul aircraft shortages remain the primary barrier to launching new international routes, with meaningful fleet relief expected in two to three years. Singapore is not viable for nonstop passenger service with any aircraft currently in operation. Tokyo presents the strongest near-term opportunity through a partnership with Japan Airlines (JAL). Riyadh is unlikely due to fleet limitations at Riyadh Air, while Jeddah, Saudi Arabia offers a more realistic alternative via Saudia Airlines. There is also potential for service between Asunción and MIA, pending a forthcoming decision from GOL Airlines.

On the cargo side, Singapore and Riyadh lack freighter service and have limited prospects. Jeddah is again the more feasible Saudi gateway through Saudia Airlines. Tokyo (Narita International Airport) shows long-term potential with Nippon Cargo Airlines, though near-term growth is constrained. Asunción is already adequately served by Avianca Cargo and LATAM Cargo.

As part of MIA's broader modernization program, establishing direct air connectivity to certain international cities is vital to strengthening global travel and trade, advancing Miami-Dade County's long-term economic development objectives, and enhancing the capacity of international businesses to operate, invest, and expand within the community.

First Quarterly Report

Over the past three years, Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) staff has been, and continues to be, engaged in a structured, multi-phase route development process for the destinations identified in this directive: Singapore, Tokyo, Riyadh, and Asunción, except for Tokyo, which MDAD has actively pursued since June 2011. These cities represent major financial, commercial, and emerging trade hubs that align with the County’s trade, tourism, and business objectives, and help preserve MIA’s competitive standing among U.S. airports. Expanding air connectivity with these cities would reinforce the County’s standing as a global economic gateway. To support that expansion, MDAD continues to move forward with a route development strategy built on market analysis, targeted airline engagement, international outreach, participation in global route conferences, and direct discussions with airline leadership. The goal is to identify and secure viable new air service opportunities that strengthen MIA’s global connectivity.

The First Quarterly Report and all subsequent quarterly reports will outline key information and progress updates in the route-development process for each destination. This includes airline and government engagement, route feasibility and status, notable developments, next steps, and an anticipated timeline.

Table 1, as shown below, provides a consolidated overview of the progress achieved to date, with detailed narrative updates for each destination presented in the sections that follow.

Destination Overview

Table 1: Route Development Status

Destination	Airline/ Government Engagement	Route Feasibility/ Status	Notable Developments	Next Steps	Anticipated Timeline
Singapore	Singapore Airlines planning to meet MDAD staff in the World Routes Fall conference or prior.	Under discussion with MDAD staff as strong potential for cargo. Cargo Study pending.	Singapore Airline does not have long-range passenger aircraft availability and has limited cargo aircraft availability. Meetings with MDAD staff continue.	Continue discussions with Singapore Airlines.	TBD
Tokyo	Japan Airlines (JAL)	Long-Term Opportunity. Business Case completed.	JAL has long-range aircraft availability, and it further increases in 2-3 years. MIA is inviting	Maintain engagement with JAL. Continue coordinating charter flights	2-3 years

			<p>charter flights for World Baseball Classic to showcase operational capacity.</p> <p>Future cargo service potential with Nippon Cargo Airlines.</p>	for World Baseball Classic.	
Riyadh/Jeddah	Saudia Airlines	<p>Riyadh Airport is under renovation, and Riyadh Air does not have long-range aircraft to provide direct passenger and cargo services.</p> <p>Jeddah is a more likely destination for such services.</p> <p>Airline studies completed.</p>	<p>Jeddah is more favorable. Saudia Airlines views Miami as a strong market, but requires aircraft acquisition.</p>	Support Saudia Airline planning efforts; continue coordination on operational and market readiness.	2-3 years
Asunción	Paraguayan government led developments	<p>Market and airlines studies completed.</p> <p>Discussions regarding the potential for *Fifth-Freedom operations via Asunción were initiated with GOL Airlines in 2024. At that time, GOL Airlines showed no interest in</p>	<p>The Paraguayan government is working with MDAD to establish non-stop passenger service.</p> <p>Currently, American Airlines (AA) does not have the aircraft.</p> <p>GOL Airlines is reevaluating the route with a decision possibly</p>	<p>Continue supporting developments, market, and operational readiness.</p> <p>Follow-up discussions with GOL Airlines regarding the possibility of launching service in February 2026.</p>	2026-27

		pursuing the opportunity. However, on Feb. 12, 2026 GOL expressed a renewed desire to re-evaluate the route, signaling a possible shift in their strategic outlook.	in February 2026. Cargo services between MIA and Asuncion is currently provided by Avianca and LATAM Cargo.		
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*Fifth Freedom Flight - is an international air service that allows an airline to carry passengers between two foreign countries as part of a route that begins or ends in the airline’s home country. It is one of the “Freedoms of the Air” established under international aviation agreements.

1. Singapore

Singapore is a leading global financial center and a critical gateway to Southeast Asia. Currently, direct passenger service between MIA and Singapore Changi Airport (SIN) is unlikely due to the range limitations of current aircraft.

Direct cargo service is more probable, since it does not require nonstop service. Many cargo routes have multiple stops within their route. Singapore Airlines Cargo has limited aircraft but plans to order more in the future. MDAD continues to engage with the airline and the Singapore Embassy’s Trade & Tourism Office, with meetings held on November 21, 2025, December 1, 2025, and most recently on February 2, 2026, to further discuss opportunities for potential service collaboration.

2. Tokyo

Tokyo is home to one of the world’s largest metropolitan economies and serves as a central hub for finance, advanced manufacturing, and technology. Direct flights from Miami would significantly enhance access to Japan and Northeast Asia, facilitating business travel, investment activities, and cultural and educational exchanges.

Mayor Daniella Levine Cava traveled to Japan from November 25 to December 6, 2023, as part of the Americas Linkage trade mission with the County’s International Trade Consortium (ITC) in partnership with the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC). During the trip, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade delegation met with senior representatives of JAL to promote Miami as a destination and to discuss the potential for direct air service between Tokyo and Miami. JAL agreed to continue evaluating the route. Since then, MDAD staff has met with JAL annually at the Southeast U.S./Japan Joint Meeting each fall, as well as during the Routes World Conference held in October 2025.

Most recently, JAL acquired a variety of new passenger aircraft capable of flying direct between Tokyo and MIA for their current destination network, and more are expected to arrive for new routes within the next two to three years, increasing the potential for service. In the meantime, MDAD continues to pursue the destination and is facilitating multiple charter flights for this Spring's World

Baseball Classic games (as MIA did in 2023), which will continue to showcase the airport's ability to efficiently handle flights from Japan, including all airfield and terminal operations and VIPs.

3. Riyadh/Jeddah

Riyadh is rapidly emerging as a global business and investment center under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative, which is driving increased international trade, tourism, and aviation demand. The government of Saudi Arabia has committed to establishing two hubs, one in Riyadh and one in Jeddah.

Riyadh Airport is undergoing massive renovations and expansion to become the largest in the world, with completion expected in 20 years. Riyadh Air is a new airline with a limited fleet of long-range aircraft. Therefore, they do not currently have the feasibility to fly nonstop to Miami. The airline plans to receive additional aircraft over the next several years. After multiple meetings with both the airline and the airport during October and November of 2025, MIA determined that the potential for short-term direct air service is limited, and that a more favorable option is service to Jeddah.

Jeddah is another major commercial gateway to Saudi Arabia and the Red Sea region, serving as a hub for trade, logistics, and tourism. A direct flight via Saudia Airlines from Miami would strengthen economic ties with the Middle East, support the growing demand for business and leisure travel, and improve access to markets across the Gulf, Africa, and South Asia. Saudia Airlines believes Miami is a great opportunity but requires two to three years to acquire the necessary aircraft and establish service, which were discussed on October 15, 2025.

4. Asunción

Asunción serves as Paraguay's economic and governmental center and is a strategic gateway to South America. It is the only Latin American capital not served from Miami. Direct service would enhance access to emerging markets, foster agricultural and manufacturing trade, and strengthen business ties throughout the region. Currently, the Paraguayan government is working with MDAD to establish service between MIA and Silvio Pettrossi International Airport (ASU/SGAS) in Asunción. American Airlines is the most likely airline to provide the service but currently does not have the proper aircraft to operate the route.

As mentioned previously, MDAD staff met with GOL Airlines during the Routes World Conference in 2024 and discussed idea of Fifth Freedom Flights via Asuncion, but at the time, GOL Airlines did not express any interest. However, it appears that there has been a shift in position and as recently as February 12, 2026, as GOL Airlines is re-evaluating the route, and has engaged with the Paraguayan government regarding Fifth Freedom rights. It is now highly probable that the carrier may announce air service between MIA and Asuncion route in February 2026. Mayor Daniella Levine Cava traveled to Asunción on May 27–28, 2025, to meet with the city's mayor, an effort that has undoubtedly supported and advanced this initiative.

Conclusion

MIA is pursuing new direct international routes through a structured development strategy, with progress largely dependent on aircraft availability, which will reinforce Miami-Dade County's standing as a global economic gateway. Highlights include cargo discussions with Singapore Airlines, feasible passenger service to Tokyo with JAL, and a favorable outlook for future service to

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Jeddah with Saudia Airlines, all expected within the next two to three years. A planned MIA-Asunción route is targeted for 2027.

Given the lengthy and complex process involved in negotiating and establishing direct flight routes between MIA and international cities, my Administration recommends scheduling this report on a semiannual or annual basis rather than quarterly. Should you require additional information, please contact Aviation Director, Ralph Cutié, at 305-876-7066.

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