August 4, 2017

PBS Program Updates and Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

This *PBS Notepad* is a follow-on to *PBS Notepad 17-05* that discussed the recently installed software version, 17.1, into the PBS system. In addition, a Frequently Asked Question section covers new topics and those discussed in *PBS Notepad 17-02*.

We cannot stress enough that there is a significant amount of accurate, quality information available to the Delta pilot group (originating from several locations) conveniently organized on a single website at http://www.pbshelp.info/delta/. It is highly encouraged that you book mark this URL on your browsers and including the browsers on your Surface tablet.

It has been and always will be the intent of the Delta PBS Working Group (PWG), and specifically the Delta MEC PBS Committee, to represent the collective preferences of the Delta pilots and to defend the PWA as your representatives on the PWG. In this capacity, we are your subject-matter experts and we have always openly and happily taken all suggestions, critiques, complaints and compliments seriously. This goes back to LOA 46 (December 2004) that first framed the PBS program at Delta and has continued with great success through bankruptcy, post-bankruptcy, the merger, LOAs and several PWA negotiating cycles. Please rely on us to answer your questions and address your issues, as information obtained elsewhere is often inaccurate.

We encourage any and every suggestion and critique on our PBS system, the interfaces, and our PWA. We will always do our best to incorporate what is possible and to explain when some things are impossible. Along these lines, when enhancements are possible, some may take more time than others. Not seeing an enhancement or change requested does not mean it is being ignored. We have a pilot group of nearly 14,500 educated women and men and one person's great idea may be the exact opposite of another. The PWG and PBS Committee is committed to maintaining the finest program and product already the envy of the industry.

Program Updates

The details about the recent software update to PBS can be found in *PBS Notepad 17-05* , but since that publication, there have already been some bug fixes we would like to bring to your attention.

- A bug causing the use If *Not Departing On* with other parameters returning no matches in the Pairings Screen and analysis on the Bids Screen has been fixed.
    - This is most commonly used with other parameters such as *If Not Duty On* and *If Not Layover On.*
    - Whereas there are conditions in which using double negative preferences make sense, we have more often than not encountered bidders using some clumsy logic in their searches and bids. We suggest trying to minimize the use of *If Not* to a single parameter to avoid confusing yourself. ***This is only a suggestion and by no means a requirement or a rule.***
    - When attempting to edit a bid line using *If Not* we have had issues in which trying to change the preference, bidders are inadvertently changing from one preference to the other as the system will revert to the default setting. For this reason we are suggesting that instead of editing, simply add a brand-new bid line that clearly expresses the

desire for *If* or *If Not* and delete the previous bid line. A cross-check with the 'matching' column of the Analyzer helps.

- We are already working with NAVBLUE to make this more overt to the bidder and to enhance the editing function.
- A bug that occurred during last month's bid period affected some bidders under some conditions, when they were offline, that prevented the Apply button to be active when adding prefer off dates. This also has been fixed.

The speed at which these bugs are identified, fixed, and updated to the system is one many benefits of HTML5 and the structure of the WebApp. Without a doubt, just as we have encountered bugs with the older UIs, we will have bugs in the WebApp. All software has bugs and this is not unique to the WebApp. What is impressive, however, is that in the past, based on the infrastructure of the program and the programming required, the time required for bug fixes were usually measured in months. The examples above were measured in days.

FAQs

This section covers many of our most frequently asked questions. Some go back to *PBS Notepad 16-01*. One of the greatest challenges we have, and this is not unique to PBS, is education; we encourage all pilots to read the *PBS Notepads* and watch the available webinar videos, all of which can be found here. The Q&A that follows has been addressed in *Notepads*, videos, webinars, Crew Resources and Flight Ops newsletters, posts on the PBS Info Screen, and text blasts. It is not without irony we address this here, but more information is always better than too little.

I heard a rumor we are getting a new PBS system. Is that true?
No, this is not true. Our PBS program remains unchanged over the past 12 years. However, the PBS Committee has continued to oversee enhancements to existing bid features and implementing new features. What was new is that in May 2016 the new user interface commonly called the PBS WebApp was introduced.

Why are we getting a new interface when the old ones work just fine?
PBS Notepad 17-01 covers this topic and is the source document for review.

We have had numerous complaints over the speed of the previous web UI. We have also had numerous complaints about the Windows only nature of the desktop application. The new WebApp addresses these complaints.

The original PBS specifications called for a web-based interface that would work on any computer connected to the internet without needing to install any software. The scenario envisioned a pilot walking into an internet café anywhere in the world and entering their bids. Unfortunately, this interface was relatively slow and depended upon a host of factors that neither Delta nor NAVBLUE could control, such as network speed, browser compatibility, and permitted connectivity through private firewalls.

The requirements also included specifications for an offline program. At the time, Mac users were a small percentage of the pilot population and Apple had just introduced the Intel Macs which permitted a Mac user to run Windows and use the desktop application. Thus, the programming effort went into adding features such as

analysis tools as opposed to compromising functionality to provide a Mac and Windows version.

The technology horizon has changed because we have a lot of Mac users, iPad users, and we have all been issued a Microsoft Surface. And it is now possible to create dynamic web content that caches within the browser.

NAVBLUE has used this new web technology, HTML5, to produce a new interface that can provide much of the cross-device accessibility of a web page with the features such as offline capability, speed, and analysis tools offered in the desktop application.

I have heard that we cannot use the desktop application anymore. Is this true?
The desktop application (DA) is no longer supported and has been discontinued as of this past month (including the September bid period) with the installation of the 17.1 software. The functionality the users had in the DA exist in the PBS WebApp, and in fact even more features have been added.

Retiring of the DA has been discussed for more than a year and a half and can be reviewed in the *PBS Notepads* starting with 16-01 and going forward. This was also briefed to the MEC at every regular meeting starting in March 2016.

I've heard that the creation of the WebApp and the removal of the desktop application is a huge cost savings for NAVBLUE and Delta.
This is simply untrue and actually quite the opposite. The reasons for removing the DA are discussed above. NAVBLUE has made a huge capital and personnel investment in embracing the modern technology of HTML5 by more than doubling their programming staff who specialize in HTML5 and the upfront costs of creating, developing, and bringing to market a new UI. The motivations were never cost savings but in having an industry leading product line. None of the costs have been passed along to Delta or the Delta pilots.

Does the PBS WebApp work on my Company issued Surface 3 Tablet?
Yes. However, it is highly recommended that you download the Google Chrome browser. While the WebApp will work with the pre-installed Internet Explorer, Google Chrome is faster and will result in a better experience. This is explained in *PBS Notepad 17-01*.

Why does the WebApp seem slower on my S3 Tablet than on my own computer?
The Surface 3 itself is slow. One primary consideration was its ability to be used with a backup battery. Whether we like it or not, the Company distributed Surface 3 is already a few versions behind the most up-to-date devices on the market and have neither the fastest processor nor as much as RAM as the newer models. Nevertheless, the WebApp operates fine on the S3.

I've been told there are many bids and features that don't exist in the PBS WebApp that we had in the older software.
That is not true. All bid features from the DA or Web User Interface (UI) have been incorporated into the PBS WebApp. What is true is that some menus may look a little

different, but nothing has been removed or eliminated. It has been the experience of the PWG that most issues and challenges faced by users in transitioning to the PBS WebApp have simply been a certain lack of familiarity. This is one reason that the PBS WebApp was provided to the pilot group well over a year prior to eliminating the DA.

I am having trouble scrolling on the WebApp. How do I do it?
This UI is not simply a website but a Web application and it will operate within the bounds of your device, operating system, and browser but also, and perhaps most importantly, to your settings. There is a guide on the PBS Help website that specifically discusses scrolling.

Why won't you let me use EasyBid?
EasyBid has never been officially approved. How it sends bid preferences depends on the current web-based interface and the availability of the bid packages from Delta in a text format. Once the current web user interface is retired, EasyBid *in its current form* will no longer work, nor will it work should Delta decide to stop producing text bid packages or if the bid package format changes. We have had no contact with Flightline and do not know if Flightline will develop functionality to work in this new environment. The reason for the new interface is to provide a better tool for Delta pilots. As has been the case since the inception of PBS, if you opt to use a third-party software, any errors in bid submission or results are your own responsibility. There is no intent to lock EasyBid out.

The key feature enjoyed by EasyBid users is the ability to analyze what you ask for with each award. The Web App will also show you which pairings you have potentially asked for with a given award preference. These are the pairings you have not already asked for or eliminated with previous Avoid or Prefer Off preferences. This is referred to as "Added to Preferred Pool" abbreviated as "+ Preferred Pool." The WebApp will additionally show the pairings eliminated with a Prefer Off or Avoid and which pairings match a preference with no regard to previous preferences.

Why did I have one of my trips awarded in PBS dropped in iCrew?
Shortly after the PBS bids close, a snapshot of a pilot's current line is taken. This snapshot is taken just before the PBS processing of that pilot's category has begun and will include the results of any PCS runs that occurred after the bids closed, but prior to the time that the snapshot was taken. A line will then be built that maintains FAR and PWA compliance with the pilot's line as it exists in the snapshot. Any changes to a pilot's line from the "snapshot" line that occur prior to completing the PBS award are not accounted for in the pilot's preliminary award. This can create a violation that must be reconciled prior to the pilot's line being released into iCrew. Reconciliation must be completed no later than 1800E on the 17th of each month.

This reconciliation, known as the *line adjustment process*, is defined as the process by which the Company *removes* a rotation(s) from a regular pilot's line for the next bid period that would otherwise create an FAR and/or PWA conflict(s).

Am I pay protected for my dropped trips during the line adjustment process?
Rotation guarantee for rotations removed during the line adjustment process is driven by whether the conflict was due to an assignment or an award.

If a rotation on a pilot's future month line is removed because of the line adjustment process, and the removal was required because: he over-flew his block or duty; he was rerouted into additional block or duty; he was inversely assigned a rotation, or he was assigned a reserve rotation, during the time of the bid award process, that pilot will receive rotation guarantee with a corresponding recovery obligation.

If the line adjustment removal was required because of a WS or GS award, then the conflicting trip is removed no pay guarantee.

Important Reminders and Updates

- When switching categories, your Default Bid will be erased
  - This is *not new* or unique to the PBS WebApp as it has always worked this way
  - The reason for this is that it requires you to assess a new Default Bid for your needs in your new category
  - You can copy portions of past bid period Current and/or Default Bids into your new Default Bid. Please do not forget to SUBMIT this bid.
- Please make sure you are running the most up to date version of the WebApp
  - Explained in *PBS Notepad 17-05*
  - The WebApp version will be posted on the Info screen of PBS
- Coming soon to a PBS WebApp near you:
  - Traditional calendar view option
  - Support for iPhone 6S Plus and 7S Plus
- PBS WebApp Features under consideration or development
  - Pairing footprint view
  - Open/Close All Dates of Operation view
  - Ability to add Award/Avoid bids from the text of search on Pairings screen
  - Ability to add Award/Avoid bids by Pairing Number and Date from Pairings screen

Contact: PBSCommittee@alpa.org