

# Education Hub FAQ

Over the past several weeks, the majority of questions and feedback we've received from you have centered on United's proposal to implement a Preferential Bidding System (PBS).

As a reminder, PBS is a scheduling system where flight attendants submit bids based on their personal preferences, including:

- Specific pairings
- Days off
- Types of trips
- Layovers
- Start times
- Flying certain aircraft

**Importantly, PBS does not create individual pairings; that process would remain unchanged. Nor does it change or eliminate a flight attendant's ability to pick up, trade or drop trips, either to other flight attendants or open time.**

Instead, the PBS system builds schedules by awarding trips to their individual preferences as much as possible. And it removes the line build process.

PBS represents an opportunity for United to join the rest of the industry and move to a more modern, efficient scheduling process. Your flight attendant peers at American, JetBlue and Delta all currently use PBS. AFA has also implemented PBS at other airlines like Alaska, Frontier and Hawaiian. Additionally, ALPA pilots at United have used PBS since 2005.

## Why is United interested in PBS?

In addition to moving to a more modern, efficient scheduling process, PBS can support a more efficient and predictable operation. PBS also introduces cost savings that provide the AFA with more flexibility to address other priorities that matter to flight attendants without increasing the cost of the overall agreement.

## Operationally

PBS can help:

- Better match staffing to demand
- Allow for greater refinement of the schedule prior to bid close
- Reduce last-minute adjustments and manual schedule changes
- Eliminate the need for a vacation relief bid
- Allow training to be bid as part of the flight attendant's schedule

A more predictable operation can mean fewer disruptions, fewer reassignments, and better use of resources, which is good for both flight attendants and customers.

## Financially

PBS can also create financial efficiencies from:

- Reduced administrative complexity
- Fewer manual interventions in scheduling
- Better alignment between staffing and actual flying needs
- Lower downstream costs tied to inefficiencies and rework

These cost savings contribute to the overall competitiveness and financial performance of our airline and create opportunities to add more value to TA2.

## Why is PBS being discussed again after TA1?

After TA1 was voted down, both parties stepped back to reexamine the full scope of issues on the table, with each side determining what issues would be reconsidered for TA2.

United proposed PBS in TA2 as part of an effort to bring the airline more in line with the broader industry and support a more modern, efficient scheduling process that can improve coverage across the network.

Any cost savings generated over time through these efficiencies are intended to be directed back toward flight attendant priorities as part of the overall contract. As with some provisions, PBS would be implemented over time, and the full impact of those savings would be realized as the system is rolled out.

## Would PBS start right away?

No.

Unlike some items, such as wages, which would take effect immediately after ratification, the implementation of PBS would be a multi-year process.

PBS would require significant design, planning, testing, training, and collaboration with flight attendants and the AFA before launch.

And if PBS is part of the agreement, its design, rules, training and implementation would be developed in partnership with AFA and with input from flight attendants, with a focus on usability, transparency and long-term support.

### **Has AFA dealt with PBS before?**

Yes. AFA worked with a team from United and Jeppesen to implement the Flight Attendant Bidding System (FABS) for vacation relief bidding as part of the JCBA. In addition, AFA has implemented PBS at other airlines like Alaska, Frontier and Hawaiian. That experience provides important insight into what a successful, thoughtful rollout looks like, including how to phase implementation, support training and education, incorporate feedback and address any issues.

## What are some potential benefits of PBS for flight attendants?

Depending on how it is designed, governed and supported, PBS can offer some advantages:

PBS may:

- Give flight attendants more influence over how their schedules are built, particularly when individual preferences don't align neatly with pre-built lines.
- Allow bids to reflect what matters most to you, rather than requiring you to choose a single line that may include tradeoffs you wouldn't otherwise make. That flexibility can be valuable — especially in complex or irregular flying.
- Reduce the gap between what a schedule looks like on paper and how it actually feels to work by building trips around stated preferences instead of fixed assumptions.
- Offer more variety in flying throughout the month. For example, the current FABS allows flight attendants to mix domestic and international flying, as well as international flying to different cities. The current bid system favors "pure" lines by building a line to a single destination (all NRT, or all CDG) or all domestic flying. The specific rules for a PBS would depend on how the program is designed by United and AFA.
- Allow some flight attendants to avoid tradeoffs they don't value, such as taking on less desirable report times or pairings in exchange for a single "good" feature of a line.
- Support longer-term schedule stability when implemented thoughtfully, particularly in complex operations, by reducing the need for manual rework after schedules are awarded.

## What are some commonly raised concerns from flight attendants on PBS?

- PBS can feel complex at first, particularly for those new to preference-based bidding or who are accustomed to fixed lines. Bidding would require clear training and access to support as flight attendants learn how to translate their priorities into bids.
- PBS may feel less predictable than line bidding for those who value knowing exactly what their schedule will look like before bidding. PBS prioritizes preferences over fixed packages, which can introduce more variation month to month.
- Highlight tradeoffs more visibly, since preferences are weighed against one another. Not getting a preferred outcome can feel more personal, even when seniority and rules are applied correctly.

## Do we use anything like PBS today?

Yes, in limited ways. A couple of examples include:

- Vacation Relief Lines are currently awarded using FABS, which is a preferential bidding system.
- Reserve Preferencing has been in place for awarding Reserve assignments for more than a decade.

Important notice

Help & feedback

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