

# Sustainable Travel: Major U.S. Airlines Approach, and What You Can Do

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The global airline industry contributes approximately 2% of all human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to 915 million tons of Carbon Dioxide. Interestingly, air transport accounts for only 12% of the total transportation impact, with ground transportation accounting for 74%. But there is great news ahead from the airline industry, with significant steps and commitments underway to not only be carbon neutral, but achieving net zero carbon emissions within the next 30 years. We have broken down what this means in practical terms and what the specific carriers are committing to accomplish these efforts, as well as what you can do from a corporate perspective.

**Carbon Neutral** is achieved when the carbon emissions from the company's air travel is neutralized through several different carbon offset programs and investments, as well as taking steps to reduce initial carbon output.

**Net Zero Carbon Emissions** refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. We reach net zero when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.

**Sustainable Aviation Fuels** are alternative fuels derived from sources such as algae, jatropha, or waste by-products which can reduce the carbon footprint of aviation by up to 80%.

## What are Airlines Doing to Be Sustainable?

### Delta Air Lines

Last year, Delta made a commitment to be a Carbon Neutral company from March 2020 onward. To accomplish this, the company retired more than 200 older aircraft, replacing them with new aircraft that are 25% more fuel efficient per seat mile, as well as continuing to invest in the research and development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). The airline's goal is to replace 10 percent of its fossil fuels with SAF by the end of 2030.

In Carbon Offset programs, Delta is investing in forest protection for more than half a million acres of forests through a community-driven conservation model in Indonesia and Cambodia, with investments to support the cost of running the programs while avoiding the release of an average of 5 million metric tons of carbon to the atmosphere each year. You can read more about [Delta's Sustainability Efforts](#) on their website.



## United Airlines

United Airlines has made the commitment to reduce 50% of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In 2019, the airline agreed to purchase up to 10 million gallons of sustainable aviation fuel over the course of two years. This fuel is currently used to help sustainably power every flight departing out of United's Los Angeles Airport hub (LAX), and achieves more than a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions on a lifecycle basis. United is currently the only U.S. airline to use SAF in their regular operations.

In 2019, United committed a further \$40 million to accelerate the development of SAF and other decarbonization technologies. You can learn more about [United's Sustainability Efforts](#) on their website.

## Southwest Airlines

Southwest Airlines historically has invested over \$620 Million to improve their fuel efficiency by approximately 50% on a revenue ton mile (RTM) basis. Like Delta Airlines, Southwest has committed to buying sustainable aviation fuel each year once it becomes available. They are currently committed to 3 million gallons of fuel per year.

In 2019, Southwest supported more than 40 conservation projects, including partnership with the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The airline's conservation efforts are outlined in their annual report; the 2020 report is not yet available, but you can read about their 2019 efforts in their [One Report](#).

## American Airlines

Every year, American Airlines publishes their [ESG Report](#), which outlines their sustainability goals, as well as their carbon emissions and offset efforts for the year. The airline is currently working to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 through operational and technical improvements, as well as sustainable fuel alternatives and offset programs.

Specifically, in addition to the investment of operating more fuel efficient aircrafts, over the past two years, the airline reduced their emissions by 8% due to improved fuel efficiency, while increasing the number of passengers and amount of cargo they carried. Further investments to specialized software provides over 85% of the airline's mainline aircrafts with optimal flight altitudes and speeds for fuel efficiency. The use of this software works to save fuel and reduce emissions, particularly on long-haul flights. By mid-2020, this technology was used on 85% of American's mainline aircraft. You can read more details about American's sustainability efforts in their Annual Report.

# How Can My Company Offset Our **Carbon Footprint** for Travel?



As the global airline industry's share of global emissions is projected to rise in the coming years, it is essential that both airlines and travelers remain aware of the impacts that air travel has on the environment, and that all members of the industry take steps toward more sustainable programs.

working to reduce the impact of flying by taking significant steps toward eco-friendly travel and offsetting carbon usage. Another way is to keep track of your own company's carbon footprint, and any correlating offset programs.

At Travel Incorporated, we provide our clients with two ways to measure and monitor their company's carbon footprint and related offset.

One of the best ways to reduce your carbon footprint is by traveling with airlines that are



Carbon Footprint Formula: Total Mileage \* .0001750

**TI's Carbon Footprint Dashboard** shows the estimated tonnage of carbon as calculated by the total air mileage traveled, multiplied by the carbon emissions in tons/mile. This can help you keep track of your company's usage and stay on track with your sustainability goals.



Carbon Offset Formula: Total Mileage \* .0001750 \* 2204.60 \* .0070

**TI's Carbon Offset Dashboard** calculates an estimated amount of investment in carbon-reducing methods needed to offset the carbon footprint. For example, if your company has \$800K in air spend, this would equate to approximately 657.46 tons of carbon, and an offset investment of \$10,146.03.

These features allow your company to set clear sustainability goals and build programs customized to reach those goals.



## Traveling Toward a Better Tomorrow

We at TI hope that by providing these resources, and partnering with sustainably-minded companies, we can help create a healthy and interconnected future for our planet.

You can learn more about Travel Incorporated's Sustainability Initiatives on the [Social Responsibility Page](#) on our website.