

Delta Air Lines to connect aircraft with Viasat-powered in-flight Internet

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Carlsbad, Calif., satellite Internet provider Viasat said Tuesday that it has landed a contract to deliver in-flight Internet connectivity to more than 300 Delta Air Lines aircraft starting this summer.

Delta hasn't used Viasat previously to power in-flight connectivity. But Viasat is a top supplier to other airlines, including JetBlue, American Airlines and United Airlines. About 1,390 [commercial aircraft](#) are flying with Viasat's satellite Internet connectivity.

Delta has relied on rival Gogo for in-flight Wi-Fi up until now. Glenn Latta, managing director of in-flight entertainment and Wi-Fi for Delta, said the airline will work with multiple suppliers going forward, including Gogo and Viasat.

The contract covers mainline narrow-body [aircraft](#)—both new deliveries and retrofits of existing planes. Delta's fleets of A321neo, 737-900ER and select 757-200 aircraft are earmarked for Viasat installations. The airline has an option to add additional fleets in the future.

Delta wants to provide a range of Internet services

to passengers, ranging from Wi-Fi to a personalized passenger portal in seatback screens to over-the-top video streaming to any connected device.

"In working with Viasat, we gain the tools needed to deepen customer interactions and bring us closer to delivering more personalized in-flight content, as well as an ability to consistently provide free, fast, streaming Wi-Fi in the future," said Bill Lentsch, chief customer experience officer for Delta.

Signing Delta as a customer provides a bit of good news for Viasat's in-flight connectivity business that's been hamstrung by the COVID-19 pandemic as fewer people fly. Roughly 320 aircraft with Viasat in-flight connectivity technology were grounded last quarter because of scant demand.

The company expects a rebound in air travel starting sometime this year, though the timing is uncertain.

Delta's aircraft will be outfitted with Viasat's Ka-band satellite antennas and other gear that will give it access to existing satellites, as well as the upcoming ViaSat-3 constellation.

The first ViaSat-3 [satellite](#) is expected to launch late this year, with two more satellites to follow in six months intervals. The constellation will provide global coverage and nearly eight times more bandwidth than Viasat's existing satellites.

"Delta is committed to optimize the customer journey, and we're committed to helping them build a foundation toward a better in-flight Internet and entertainment experience," said Rick Baldrige, president and chief executive of Viasat. "We have a proven in-flight connectivity solution that is high-quality, streaming-capable and can scale to meet Delta's growing customer demand. We're proud to be part of their connected ecosystem."

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