

# DOT gets PI's 'on time' data on-time

The U.S. Department of Transportation has begun releasing its report cards on airline service quality, and through much hard work and our genuine commitment to improving service quality, Piedmont has enjoyed favorable ratings in all categories of performance that the DOT now monitors.

But, there's a story behind the story. The DOT's final rule on airline service quality performance requires the industry's top 14 airlines operating at the nation's 27 busiest airports to disclose certain flight data, via computer tape, for dissemination to the public and to vendors of computerized reservation systems (CRS). The individual airlines are required to disclose this on-schedule performance to the public upon request, for instance, during the course of reservations and ticketing transactions.

"Piedmont's efforts to comply with the DOT's data requirements have called for the integrated efforts of several different departments in a compressed time frame, and the results have been exemplary," Jim Tabor, manager-system performance, said.

"The technical quality of the data Piedmont submitted is superior to that which many other airlines submitted. In fact, Piedmont ranks the 'best of all the majors' in this category, according to DOT analysts."

Of Piedmont's 37,000 September data records, only 18 did not conform to DOT specifications. Of approximately the same number of operations submitted for the October report, that figure dropped to just 10.

"Several airlines had to refile until their data was acceptable, while others merely tapped the data from existing computer banks," Tabor said. "We already had the technology, so our first step was to devise a computer program to prepare the information."

He added: "It was clearly a pat on the

back of the computer services staff led by Keke Robinson. Equally impressive efforts have been exhibited in maintenance reliability, quality assurance, by CAREsystem programmers, scheduling publications, baggage services, and reservations, to name a few.

"Our organization prepared to meet the DOT requirements in a big way and we excelled," he said.

Piedmont's responsibilities in reporting to the DOT include reviewing the on-time performance of all of the previous month's operations and auditing them for times errors. The data for each reported operation must include flight number, airport codes, date of the operation, scheduled and actual arrival and departure times for each flight, scheduled and actual times elapsed, and the difference between the actual and sched-

uled departures, arrival and elapsed times.

The DOT's rule allows exclusions from the report including maintenance delays/cancellations reported to the FAA, and those consequential delays/cancellations attributed to the original maintenance delay of that aircraft and that ship routing.

What is left, Tabor said, is the "reportable operations" which are submitted to DOT on computer tape as "form 234." This data is combined with the baggage report and consumer complaints and denied boarding reports, and is then released by the DOT in its Monthly Air Travel Consumer Report.

"But our responsibilities do not stop here," Tabor said. "Performance codes must be assigned to all flights and submitted to the OAG (Official Airline Guide) which in turn includes them in its regular schedule computer-loads to the five major CRS vendors."

The codes must also be loaded for display on Piedmont's CAREsystem. Ranging from 0 to 9 (and "N" for new flights), the code reflects the percentile of on-time performance achieved by a specific flight.

For instance, if a passenger chooses a flight with a time rating of 8, this indicates that during the previous month that particular flight arrived within 15 minutes of schedule 80 to 89.9 percent of the time. Tabor said that agents have been instructed on how to explain the figure to potential passengers requesting the rating information.

According to the DOT, the report will help passengers "weigh price and quality of service in making purchasing decisions" and "permit the consumers to make more informed choices."

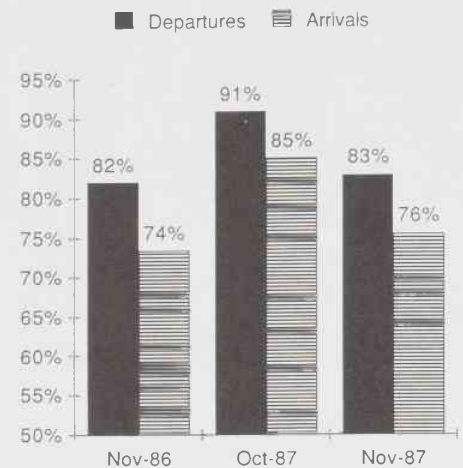
"The public generally does not know that the figures many airlines are now reporting reflect the best on-time performance the industry has experienced in months," Tabor added.

"For Piedmont, our September quality of performance was the best on record for that month. And October was even better, the best on record for that month as well."

However, Tabor warned that DOT reports in upcoming months—December especially—will more than likely compare poorly with earlier reports. "December is historically the year's worst performance month because of the heavy holiday traffic and weather," he said.

"After all, we are trying to give the public complex information, but in easy to understand terms."

## system performance



To mark the official opening of our new Pier D facilities at BWI, Chairman Bill McGee (second from left) cut a specially-prepared cake in the shape of our concourse following a press conference at BWI on November 23. With McGee are (l to r) Maryland Governor William D. Schaefer, U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes, and Ted Mathison, Maryland's director of aviation. Upon completion of the project's final phase in June 1988, we will have a

total of 25 gates, four designed for our 767-200s, plus 18 computer gates on line, in addition to a new ground control tower. The press conference was held to announce daily nonstop service between BWI and PHX which will start January 6; new nonstop service between BWI and RSW (Ft. Myers) beginning February 5; and new nonstop service between BWI and LAX which begins March 1.

