

American Airlines' In-Flight Wi-Fi to Debut in 2008



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[AirCell](#) announced on Tuesday that it will partner with American Airlines, the world's largest and leading airline, to begin offering in-flight broadband capabilities in 2008. As broadband capabilities have gone beyond the corporate workplace and become available in homes, coffee shops and even publicly-provided areas, [air travel](#) was considered the final frontier for Wi-Fi. As a part of the initial roll-out of this in-flight service, the American Airlines 767-200 fleet will be targeted, and testing will be conducted primarily on transcontinental routes. To take advantage of this service, passengers must supply their own Wi-Fi devices, including laptops, BlackBerrys, PDAs and iPhones.

Jack Blumenstein, AirCell's CEO, offered this comment: "Travelers are already bringing their own Wi-Fi enabled devices onto planes. Bringing broadband access onto domestic flights at an everyday, affordable price provides travelers the opportunity to recapture time. Making productive use of the time in the air will give them time back on the ground with family or just relaxing."

Pricing for in-flight Wi-Fi services, not currently available on any other carrier, will not be announced until the roll-out in 2008. It is not yet known the specific timing of the 2008 release, but further announcements are expected. The initial phase of the new service will include only a limited number of planes, until testing shows full customer usability. The press release indicates that AirCell was chosen as American Airlines' partner for this initiative because of that organization's one-of-a-kind air-to-ground network, which enables successfully transmission of a Wi-Fi signal to aircraft.

In a simultaneously released [press release](#) by American Airlines, the technology behind in-flight Wi-Fi was further explained. For this service to become available, each aircraft will be outfitted with three external antennas, which will communicate with cellular towers erected by AirCell throughout the United States. The service will broadcast 802.11a/b/g signals.

Dan Garton, Executive [Vice President](#) of Marketing for American Airlines, remarked, "We understand that broadband connectivity is important to our business customers and others who want to use their PDAs and laptops for real-time, in-flight broadband communications. This is part of our continuing effort to take the lead in enhancing the travel experience for our customers and meet their evolving needs."

The continuing effort Mr. Garton referred to in this press release is part of the American Airlines *Turnaround Plan*, which was developed by the organization after September 11, 2001, to ensure future success, customer satisfaction, and profitability. The four tenets of the *Turnaround Plan*, which was [announced](#) in 2003, are lower costs to compete; fly smart - give customers what they value; pull together, win together; and build a financial foundation for the future. Staying on the forefront of technology with the introduction of in-flight Wi-Fi ties with the second tenet of providing services to customers that the customer will find valuable.

Blumenstein affirmed the value of this service by saying, "Airline customers across the U.S. list broadband access in flight as one of their top wishes. As the first airline to deploy broadband access,

American is demonstrating its commitment to the business traveler and to its industry-leading position in technological innovation."

References

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