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BUSINESS

Private Jets Get a Lift as Commercial Planes Are Grounded

As coronavirus forces airlines to cut back, some companies and wealthy families turn to charters

Some business executives and wealthy travelers are turning to private jets as the fast-spreading coronavirus prompts commercial airlines to slash service.

JetSuite Inc., a Dallas charter-flight operator with a dozen jets, had several families hire its jets to pick up their children from college as schools shut down, a new request for the company. Another operator, Magellan Jets LLC, said families are using its planes—which cost at least \$5,000 an hour—to transport elderly individuals without exposing them to the risks of commercial travel.

“The whole industry is getting additional inquiries,” said JetSuite President Stephanie Chung. Her firm has had a 10% increase in private flights in recent weeks, she said, along with increased requests from corporate travel departments whose own jets are booked up.

Commercial airlines have been crippled by the rapid plunge in bookings as the novel coronavirus has spread around the world and governments have imposed travel restrictions. U.S. airlines are talking to the government about getting up to [\\$50 billion in financial assistance](#), The Wall Street Journal reported Monday. [United Airlines Holdings Inc.](#) plans to cut its flying in half for April and May; Delta Air Lines Inc. and [American Airlines Group Inc.](#) are also planning major cuts.

Some companies that otherwise use commercial flights are inquiring as they look to limit risk for their senior executives and as well for colleagues and customers with whom they meet, said Anthony Tivnan, president of Magellan Jets. “We are running net positive in bookings,” he said, “but people are changing their minds as quickly as the situation is developing.”

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