# Global Air Travel May Not Recover Until 2011

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HONG KONG (AP) — International air travel, whacked by the economic downturn, is starting to stabilize but may not recover until 2011 as companies and passengers continue to scale back, executives at aviation giants Boeing Co. and Airbus SAS said Wednesday.

Passenger travel, somewhat better so far in the second half of 2009 than in the first, was still expected to slump between 6 percent and 8 percent for the year, said Randy Tinseth, a Boeing vice president for marketing.

Still, there were signs the drop in demand was slowing, with global airlines beginning to restore capacity and the Chinese and Latin American markets picking up, he said.

"We're already starting to see some improvements in traffic and traffic growth, but we've got a long ways to go," Tinseth told reporters at an Asian aerospace and aviation show in Hong Kong. "We see 2010 as a year of economic recovery and 2011 as a year of air travel recovery."

Airlines have racked up massive losses since the global economic crisis led companies to curb travel and shipping and consumers cut back on trips. Carriers, their losses already $6 billion in first six months of the year, are set to lose a total of $9 billion for all of 2009, according to the International Air Transport Association.

Boeing rival Airbus, the world's largest manufacturer of commercial planes, said air traffic seemed to be in the process of bottoming out and was slightly more optimistic.

Global air traffic — measured by a combination of revenues, passengers and distances flown — could slide between 2 percent and 4 percent this year, but then turn flat or grow as much as 4 percent next year, according to Laurent Rouaud, the aircraft manufacturer's senior vice president for market and product strategy.

In 2011, traffic could grow over 6 percent, he said.

Asia, where major economies like China and India are still expanding fast despite severe contractions in the West, was likely to lead the recovery. The region's air traffic may be up 4 percent this year and at least 6 percent in 2010, he said.

Boeing's Tinseth said Asia is set to overtake North America as the world's largest air travel market over the next 20 years, growing from its current 32 percent share to 41 percent.

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