



Letter to Airmen

Version M
August 16, 2020

Purpose

This Letter to Airmen (LTA) is designed to provide pilots flying in the Boston Virtual ARTCC airspace (ZBW) with recommended practices from pilots and air traffic controllers to make their flight experience as realistic as possible.

About Boston Virtual ARTCC

Boston Virtual ARTCC (BVA) is a community within VATSIM's global network of pilots and controllers. We provide air traffic control within the Boston ARTCC on VATSIM. We also encourage pilot members to join the ARTCC and take advantage of exclusive scenery updates, training programs, and one of the most active and realistic aviation communities. For more information about BVA, visit www.bvartcc.com.

Scenery

Many of the airports in ZBW, especially Boston Airport (KBOS), have been substantially modified since the original release of many common flight simulation platforms. Controllers will issue instructions based on current publications. Pilots with outdated airport scenery that does not match current publications are expected to advise ATC prior to requesting taxi instructions, even if that information is filed in their flight plan.

Example: "Boston Ground, DAL2363, ready to taxi, outdated scenery."

BVA offers a free scenery package for several of our airports, including KBOS. If you are a member, visit BVA's [Downloads](#) page to access the scenery.

For non-members, an [excellent payware scenery for KBOS is available from FlyTampa](#) for FSX and P3D. For all other pilots, please download and install a freeware update:

- [FSX, Prepar3D v3, or an earlier version of Prepar3D](#) (courtesy of Ray Smith)
- [Prepar3D v4](#) (courtesy of Robert Catherall)
- [X-Plane](#)

Members of the community have access to free scenery updates we have developed for KBOS as well as other popular airports within our airspace.

ATC Timetable

Looking to see when ATC will be online? You can get an idea of expected coverage on the [homepage of our website](#). Though subject to change, the schedule can provide pilots with a good idea of when and where to expect coverage within our airspace.

Generally, we see the most activities during weekday evenings (U.S. Eastern Time) and throughout the day on weekends.

General Recommendations

When you're flying anywhere in our airspace (or, for that matter, on VATSIM), please keep the following recommendations in mind:

- **Only accept what you can perform.** If you are assigned a SID, procedure, or clearance that you don't understand or don't know you can do, speak up. We would rather provide vectors (headings and altitudes) than see an aircraft fly a procedure incorrectly.
- **Ask questions.** If you are unclear about an instruction or just want more information, ask.
- **Don't pause or leave the flight deck** without asking for permission first. It's best to ask via frequency (by voice or, if impossible, by text) rather than private message.
- **Have updated navigation capability**, if you can. Controllers expect you to have the latest capability. [Click here](#) for more information about getting updated info.
- **Ensure you have appropriate charts** and know how to interpret them. More information about finding charts is available [on our website](#). If you aren't sure about something you see on a chart, ask.
- **Know who to call.** Just like most facilities, we provide 'top-down' coverage, meaning that if a position is unstaffed, you call the next 'higher' position. Operating hours are not simulated; if a controller is online, any underlying facility is staffed. For more information on figuring out who to call, [click here](#).
- **Call early.** If you are entering our airspace when adjacent ARTCCs are offline, keep an eye on VATSpy, Vattastic, and other tools to see when you're approaching airspace. If you are inbound from UNICOM, aim to call Boston Center between 20-50 miles *prior* to reaching the ARTCC boundary.
- **Listen for frequency changes.** If instructed to "monitor" the next controller, change to the new frequency but wait for the controller to call you. Only call in to a new frequency when you have been instructed to "contact".
- **Don't over-report.** Reporting "established on the localizer", at cruise, or over waypoints is not required in the U.S., unless requested by ATC. However, it's a good practice to report when leaving an ATC-assigned altitude on a "pilot's discretion" descent.
- **Check out the [Pilot References](#) section** of our website to find preferred routes, proper aircraft types, correct equipment suffixes, and more.

Boston Airport (KBOS) Operations

Boston Logan International Airport (KBOS) is the busiest airport in our airspace. If you plan to operate to or from KBOS, there are a few pieces of information you should know.

Clearance Delivery via Controller-Pilot Datalink Communications (CPDLC)

Pilots can anticipate receiving a clearance through CPDLC. The clearance may include route amendments. CPDLC clearances are accomplished via private message from ATC. The CPDLC clearance will contain information about the cleared/approved route and altitude, any altitude restrictions, and the departure frequency and squawk code. It also includes instructions on which controller to contact and what information to provide on initial call.

Pilots can anticipate receiving clearance via CPDLC immediately after filing a flight plan. Pilots may not have called to request clearance before receiving the CPDLC message.

When cleared via CPDLC, pilots must specify the following information on their initial call:

- Location on the airport (gate or parking spot)
- The current ATIS code

Pilots who are not able to accept clearance via CPDLC should disregard the message and request a voice clearance. Similarly, pilots who have not received clearance via CPDLC should call the appropriate controller for clearance when ready to copy.

When receiving a clearance (either via CPDLC or voice), the phrase “climb via SID” may be used. This phrase indicates that the top altitude pilots are told to expect on the SID applies on departure. At KBOS, all jet aircraft have a top altitude of 5,000’, while all non-jet aircraft have a top altitude of 3,000’. When instructed to “climb via SID”, either via voice clearance or CPDLC, ensure to stop your initial climb at the appropriate top altitude for your aircraft type unless you are cleared higher by ATC.

RNAV Departures

Flight crews of jet aircraft are encouraged to include the appropriate [RNAV Standard Instrument Departure Procedure](#) in the IFR Flight Plans that they file. RNAV SIDs should be used for any KBOS jet departure with a final altitude at or above 11,000’. If a SID is not filed, pilots can expect ATC to assign the relevant RNAV SID unless the pilot specifically states an inability to comply with the SID or has filed a non-RNAV equipment suffix.

The phrase “climb via SID” will be used on all RNAV departures. This phrase instructs aircraft to stop the initial climb at the SID top altitude (5,000’) until receiving further instruction from ATC.

RNAV Arrivals and “Descend Via” Clearances

Boston ARTCC will issue [“descend via” clearances](#) to properly-equipped RNAV aircraft inbound to the Boston Terminal Area on the ROBUC, OOSH, JFUND, ZELKA, and ROZZE STAR procedures.

Pilots are expected not to begin the vertical descent portions of any of the STARs until advised by a Boston ARTCC controller to “Descend Via.” Speeds are expected to be complied with unless otherwise specified by the controller. Ensure your aircraft is programmed with the correct route (waypoints) associated with the runway transition you are assigned.

When you check in on a new frequency while “descending via”, you are required to state the arrival and runway (if any) when you check in:

Example: “Boston Approach, DAL2363, 17,500, descending via the ROBUC3 arrival, Runway 27, with information Kilo.”

Pilots unable to comply with an RNAV STAR and/or a “descend via” clearance should not accept the clearance and request headings and altitudes from ATC.

Parking and Ground Operations

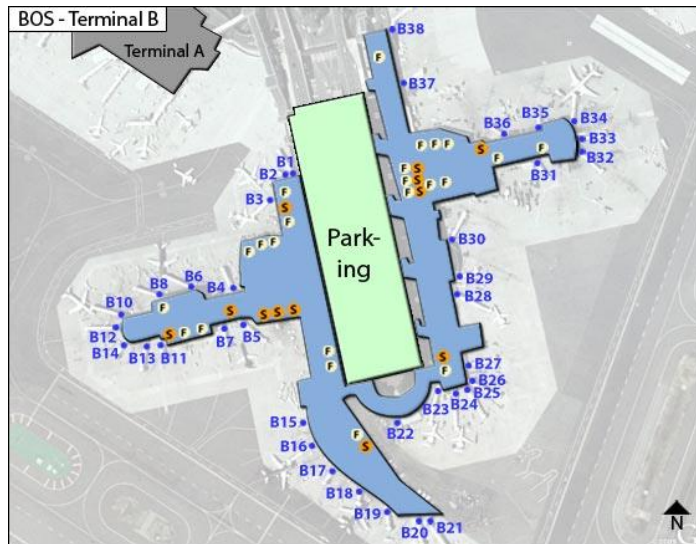
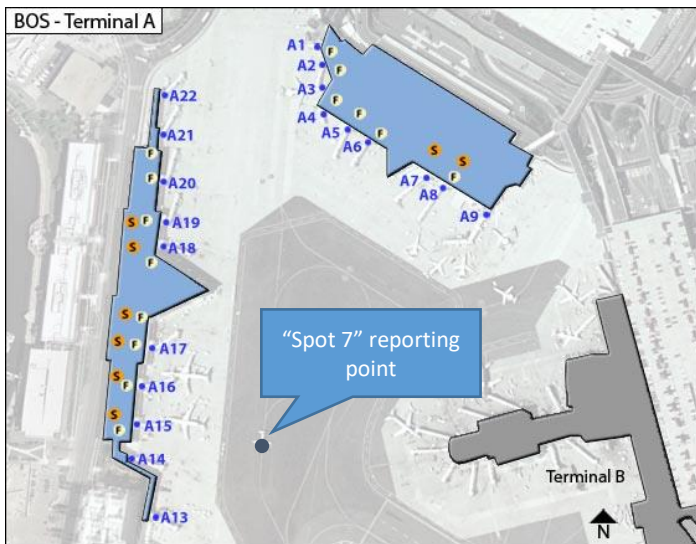
There are four terminals at KBOS: A (consisting of a main and satellite terminal), B, C, and E. Terminal E is the only terminal with customs processing and any international arrivals, including from domestic carriers, park at Terminal E. However, most international departures will originate from terminals A, B, and C.

At KBOS, Boston ARTCC provides control over movement areas, including all taxiways, runways, and many areas surrounding Terminals B, C, and E. For that reason, all aircraft are requested to advise the controller when ready to push, unless otherwise instructed.

You need a specific clearance to cross each runway you come to (active or inactive). Always hold short of a runway unless you have received a crossing instruction. If you are unsure, ask!

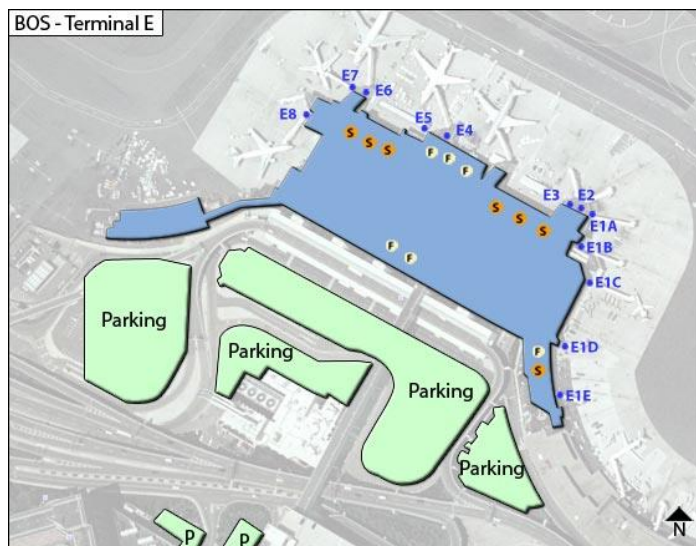
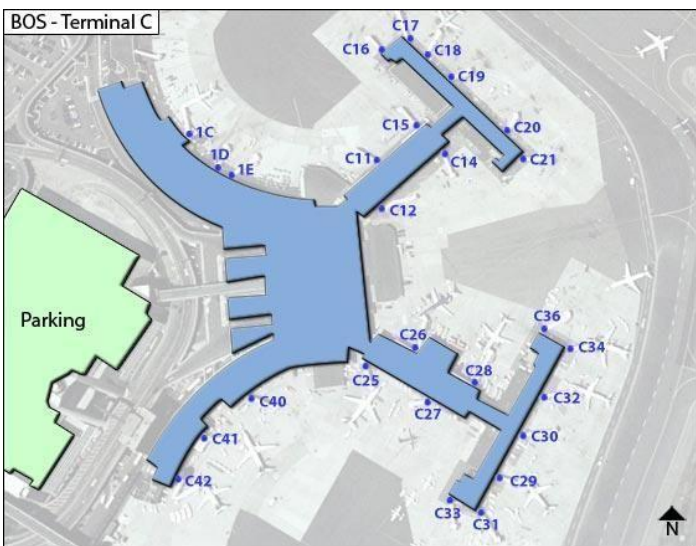
The taxiway and airport layout changed substantially at KBOS in 2010. However, controllers issue taxi instructions based on current publications. If you don’t have updated scenery, advise the controller prior to requesting taxi instructions. A comparison of the changes is available at the end of this document.

The diagrams on the following page show the gate layouts and common airline parking spots. You can also find an [interactive map of terminals and gates on the Logan Airport website](#).



Terminal A normally serves Delta Air Lines and WestJet.

Terminal B normally serves Air Canada, Alaska, American, Southwest, Spirit, and United.



Terminal C normally serves Aer Lingus, Cape Air, JetBlue, and TAP Air Portugal departures.

Terminal E normally serves Sun Country, Frontier, all international arrivals and several international departures. International arrivals from American, Delta, and JetBlue park at Terminal E. All international airline arrivals not mentioned above, including Air France, British Airways, Emirates, Icelandair, KLM, Porter, and Virgin Atlantic park at this terminal. However, most international departures from domestic carriers such as American, Delta, JetBlue leave from Terminals A – C.

Checklist for Flying in ZBW

The checklist below has been developed based on mistakes commonly noted by our controllers. Before or while flying in our ARTCC, please keep the following important points in mind:

1. Download a scenery update for KBOS: [FlyTampa](#), Freeware by Ray Smith ([FSX and P3D v3](#), [P3D v4](#)), [BVA Member Scenery](#) (members only)
2. [Update your GPS or navigation data](#) (if possible); if not, ensure to reference that you are using outdated information and file an appropriate [Equipment Suffix](#)
3. File a [preferred route](#), if established. Note that most of the RNAV procedures in and out of KBOS are only available for turbojet aircraft.
4. Have the [appropriate charts](#) for your flight.
5. Use the frequency, not private messages, when you need to communicate with controllers. Controllers always respond to frequencies before private messages.
6. Ask questions if you are unclear of, unsure of, or unable to accept a procedure. Requesting help and getting headings and altitudes is strongly preferred over flying runway heading and hoping for the best.
7. Use voice, whenever you can. We love voice pilots and would prefer to work with you on voice rather than text, even if it means slowing down or simplifying instructions. The experience is more realistic when you're using voice. (If you don't have a microphone, consider "receive only" so you listen to the controller's instructions and reply via text.)
8. Determine which frequency to contact, and call in. If you aren't sure, ask any controller (via frequency) and you'll be pointed in the right direction.
9. Know the coverage area we serve. We do not provide ATC coverage in Canada or local coverage for the New York City airports (KJFK/KEWR/KLGA), although Boston Center does overly a large portion of New York State. Many of the STARs into KEWR, KLGA, and KJFK route through Boston Center airspace.

Wings Over New England

Members of Boston Virtual ARTCC are eligible to participate in [Wings Over New England](#) (WINGS), an initiative designed to provide a voluntary training and testing program for community members. Through a series of challenge flights, the WINGS program helps teach safe and efficient aircraft operation within the air traffic control system.

You may hear members completing WINGS flights while operating inside our ARTCC.

Feedback

The controllers and staff of Boston Virtual ARTCC thank you for flying with us. We hope you enjoy your experience, and hope to see you in our airspace again soon. We love feedback! Please [tell us](#) about positive experiences or anything you'd like us to improve.

Appendix: Boston Airport (KBOS) Taxiway Layout

In the past few years, there have been several changes to the KBOS airport layout. Ground control service consistent with the current airport layout will be provided unless the pilot specifically advises the controller that they are using outdated scenery.

