

ICAO True North Advisory Group (TRUE-AG) - Update

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SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the current progress of the ICAO True North Advisory Group (TRUE-AG).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ICAO TRUE-AG was formed in early 2024. TRUE-AG has been tasked with providing advice and guidance to the ICAO Air Navigation Commission for a CONOPS and transition plan for a global implementation of true north, replacing magnetic north, as the standard reference system for aviation. Key tasks in developing a CONOPS and transition plan are safety assessment and cost-benefit analysis.

1.2 The 30-member advisory group is comprised of 17 States from the 7 different ICAO regions, along with 13 international organizations representing various interests within the aviation community (for example, Air Navigation Authorities, Aircraft Owner Associations, Manufacturer Representatives, Data Provider Representatives, Pilot and ATC associations).

1.3 This advisory group has a 3-year mandate to complete the work, then provide a report to the ICAO Air Navigation Commission in 2027. The ICAO ANC is then responsible to evaluate the report and decide on any recommendations to the ICAO General Assembly, possibly in 2028.

1.4 A comprehensive working paper was presented by IFATCA-TOC at the 2023 Annual Conference, describing the background for the True North initiative.
[IFATCA 2023 - WP95](#)

1.5 An article was presented in The Controller Magazine, October 2024 Issue, 'Heading North'.

[The Controller 2024 Issue 1](#)

This article provides discussion and includes several links to resources for additional reading.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. Current meeting format for TRUE-AG is two in-person meetings per year, with several ½ day virtual meetings in between each in-person. The first two in-

person meetings were in 2024 - Montreal, 6-10 May, and Ottawa, 9-13 September. In-person for 2025 are planned for 3-7 March and 8-12 September.

- 2.2. Global transition and switch to true north as reference for the global aviation community has been described as a “subtle, but impactful change”. A planned and coordinated global transition represents a significant undertaking and change for ANSP/State, all Operators including commercial, business, and general aviation, and for aircraft and avionics manufacturers. The change is significant as well as for all the humans involved - ATCO, ATS specialists, pilots, and procedure, approach, and chart designers.
- 2.3. Current work of the Advisory group is focused on accounting for safety risk/mitigation and cost/benefit analysis of a global transition to true north. Breakout groups within the Advisory group are focused in the areas of Aerodrome Operations, Aircraft Operators, and ANSP.
- 2.4. Participation on this Advisory Group by an IFATCA member allows for early and meaningful input and collaboration on how a global change like this one will impact ATCO (and pilots). Critical contributions from an IFATCA perspective are focused on the following aspects of an implementation like this - change management, training, and the need to engage local/regional/national operational, safety, and training teams and representatives in the preparation of change strategies, training strategies, and risk mitigations.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. For impact on ATCO around the world, it is important to note the timelines stated in 1.3 above. Report from the Advisory group to the ANC will not occur until 2027. The ANC then needs to study and evaluate and will decide on next steps. Implementations are not yet imminent.
- 3.2. Ongoing participation and engagement by IFATCA at this and other ICAO advisory groups and panels contributes to ensuring that ATCO interests and needs are considered and factored in as a meaningful part of the planning, decision making, and implementation plans that might follow.
- 3.3. This article from Smithsonian Magazine discusses the most recent news about the movement of the magnetic north pole and the most recent World Magnetic Model update for year 2025 (normally the model is updated every 5 years). [Smithsonian - Earth's shifting Magnetic North Pole](#)