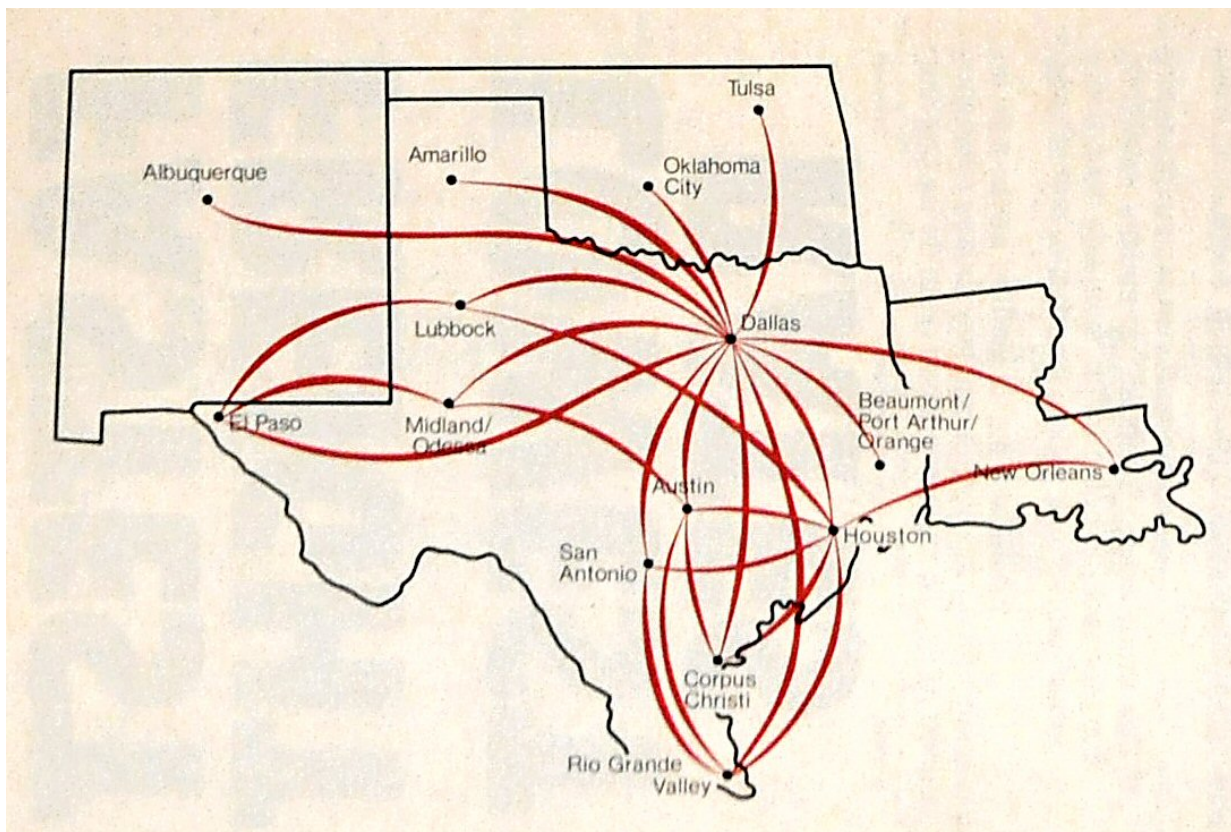




Southwest Airlines, based in Dallas, Texas, began operations in 1971 as a low-cost, intra-state air carrier using 122-seat Boeing 737-200 jets and flying solely within the state of Texas. After the Airline Deregulation Act was passed in 1978, Southwest was allowed to venture beyond the borders of Texas and began service to Albuquerque on April 3, 1980 with four daily flights to the Love Field Airport in Dallas. In order to best utilize their aircraft, the airline had “ten-minute turns” in which each flight was only scheduled at the gate at each city for no longer than ten minutes. With stricter security measures and an unfortunate accident in Albuquerque, this practice has long ended and most flights are now on the ground for more than forty minutes. Southwest quickly expanded, adding new flights to El Paso, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Denver, and within three years had become the largest carrier at the Albuquerque Sunport. Before the Sunport was expanded in the late 1980’s, Southwest had occupied gates 1 and 2 which did not have jetbridges. The carrier constructed three jetbridges starting from the ground level at these two gates. Once the airport expansion was complete in 1989, Southwest moved into six gates on the new “A” concourse. More and more flights and new nonstop destinations were continually being added and by 1990 Southwest was up to 40 departing flights per day to twelve cities. Albuquerque greatly benefitted from a ruling at the Dallas Love Field Airport called the Wright Amendment where all carriers operating aircraft with over 56 seats were limited to flying only to cities within Texas or within states that border Texas. To circumnavigate the rule, passengers coming from Love Field would fly to Albuquerque and change planes to continue to other cities further west. As a result of the added traffic, Albuquerque saw many more flights and destinations than the city could otherwise support by itself. For a short time in 1984/1985, Southwest deviated from their all Boeing 737 aircraft fleet and operated a handful of Boeing 727-200’s while waiting on delivery of the new, next generation, 137-seat, Boeing 737-300 aircraft that arrived in early 1985. That same year, Southwest also acquired a competitor, Muse Air, and operated one Albuquerque-Dallas flight with a Muse Air McDonnell Douglas DC-9-50 aircraft for two weeks in May of 1985. The Boeing 737-500, an aircraft very similar but slightly shorter than the 737-300, came to Southwest’s Albuquerque operation in 1990.



Southwest Boeing 737-200 landing at the Albuquerque Sunport, flown from 1980 through 2004.



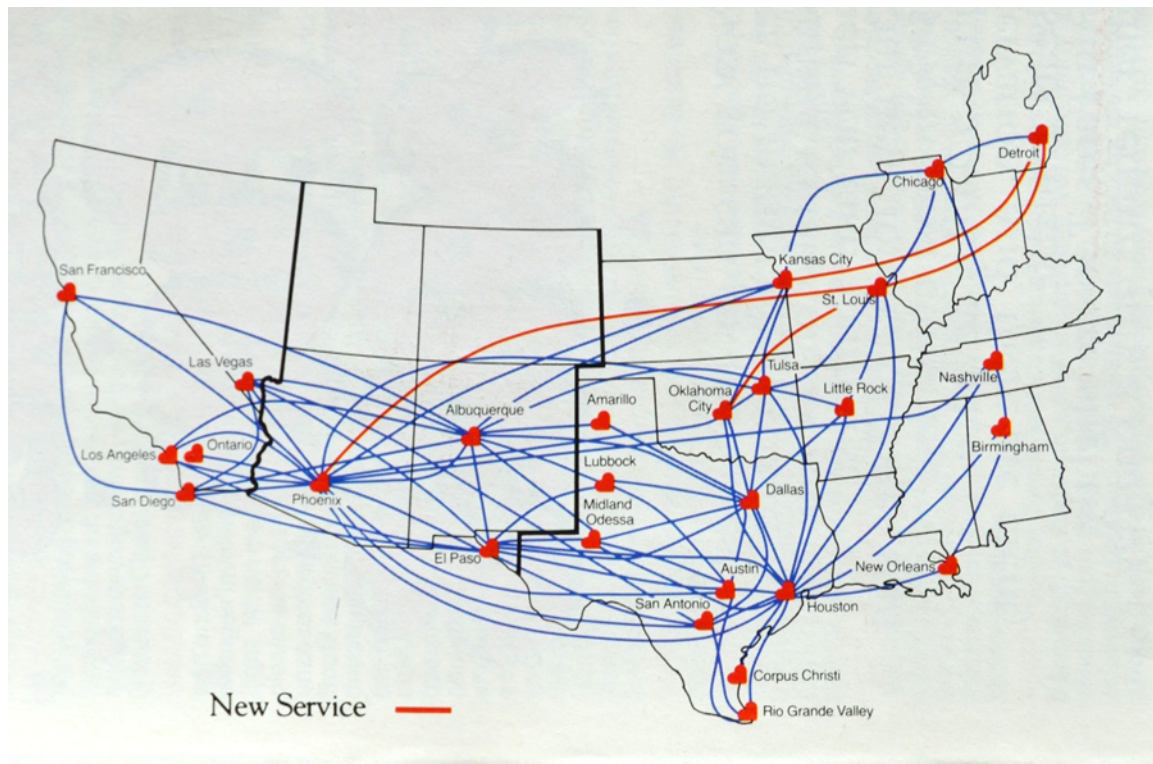
Southwest route map from April, 1980.



Southwest Boeing 727-200 flown in 1984 and 1985.



Southwest Boeing 737-300 at Albuquerque, flown from 1985 until 2017.



Southwest route map from 1987.

Through the 1990's, Southwest continued to grow at Albuquerque and the Sunport expanded the "A" concourse in 1996 with the addition of four new gates. Southwest also opened a reservations office near the Sunport. In 1998, the next-generation Boeing 737-700 (also carrying 137 passengers) joined the Southwest fleet as the older 737-200's were retired. Southwest also has a heritage of painting some of its aircraft honoring many of the States where the airline has a large presence. With the permission of the Zia Indian Tribe in New Mexico, a 737-700 was painted yellow with the Zia symbol of the sun honoring the New Mexico State flag. The aircraft was named "New Mexico One" and was formally presented at the Albuquerque Sunport on September 18, 2000.



Southwest Boeing 737-700 at Albuquerque, introduced in 1998 and wearing the new “Canyon Blue” livery adopted in 2001.



Southwest Boeing 737-700 “New Mexico One” at the Albuquerque Sunport.



Southwest route map from summer, 1998.



Four Southwest aircraft parked at gates on the A concourse of the Albuquerque Sunport.

Southwest reached a peak of 66 departures per day in the summer of 2001 operating nonstop to 21 cities but after the events of September 11, 2001 the carrier began scaling back on its operation in Albuquerque. 2008 brought a recession in the economy causing a further cutback of flights and the elimination of many short haul destinations such as Amarillo, El Paso, and Tucson. The Wright Amendment at Dallas Love Field ended in late 2014 which allowed Southwest to fly directly from Dallas to any other city in the United States. This greatly impacted the traffic through Albuquerque and by the start of 2015 the carrier had trimmed its schedule down to operating only 33 flights per day to twelve cities, half of what it was at its peak.

In 2013 the 175-seat Boeing 737-800 was introduced to Albuquerque while the older 737-500's and -300's were phased out in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Southwest introduced another new next-generation aircraft in late 2017, the Boeing 737-8 Max. The carrier was slowly adding more service and destinations back to the Albuquerque schedule but was hit hard once again after the new 737 Max was involved in two fatal crashes resulting in the grounding of the aircraft in 2018. Two years later the COVID-19 pandemic struck causing traffic to fall by over 95 percent. Southwest, as with all other carriers, began cancelling flights due to very low passenger loads, some flights having no passengers at all. By May of 2020, the schedule at Albuquerque had been reduced to only eight flights per day to five cities. This was down from an initial plan for the summer of 2020 of 37 daily flights to 15 cities. As traffic showed signs of rebounding, flights were increased to 17 per day in June and July and up to 23 per day in August serving nine destinations nonstop. However, more waves of the virus later struck causing Southwest to reduce their schedules once again. In February, 2021, service was back down to nine flights per day at Albuquerque. Through 2021, traffic began another rebound and the problems with the 737 Max were corrected enabling the aircraft to be recertified to fly. Flights were slowly added back to the schedule once again but by 2022 a worldwide labor shortage began including a shortage of commercial airline pilots. Southwest is now managing this problem and by April, 2023, three years after the pandemic began, Albuquerque is expected to be at 32 daily departures, nearly a total rebound from pre-pandemic levels and with the loss of nonstop service to only one city. Still Southwest is the busiest carrier at the Albuquerque Sunport but unlike most of the other larger carriers, Southwest has not added a regional airline feeder system. However, Southwest does still schedule their flights to fly the same plane through to additional cities providing direct service to many more destinations with one or two stops. Most other carriers have abandoned this practice and fly only nonstop flights to major hubs where passengers must change planes to continue on to other cities.



Southwest Boeing 737-800 at Albuquerque in the latest “Heart” livery introduced in 2014.



Southwest Boeing 737-8 Max at Albuquerque. The aircraft is very similar to the 737-800 but is equipped with the latest technology “LEAP” engines manufactured by CFM International.

Since the start of operations at Albuquerque, Southwest has served a total of 30 cities with nonstop flights. These cities and years of operation include:

Amarillo, TX	1982-2009	Oakland, CA	1998-
Austin, TX	2016-	Orange County, CA	2018-2018
Baltimore, MD	2000-	Orlando, FL	1997-2019
Burbank, CA	2022-	Phoenix, AZ	1982-
Chicago-Midway Airport, IL	2000-	Portland, OR	2001-2018
Dallas-Love Field, TX	1980-	St. Louis, MO	1991-2013
Denver, CO	1983-1986, 2007-	Salt Lake City, UT	1995-2012
El Paso, TX	1980-2013	San Antonio, TX	1985-1988, 2018- (seasonal)
Houston-Hobby, TX	1988-1992, 1995-	San Diego, CA	1985-1989, 1992-
Kansas City, MO	1985-1988, 1993-	San Francisco, CA	1985-1998
Las Vegas, NV	1982-	San Jose, CA	2018-2020
Los Angeles, CA	1983-1984, 1985-	Seattle, WA	1999-2016
Lubbock, TX	1983-2012	Tampa, FL	1997-2009
Midland/Odessa, TX	1983-2012	Tucson, AZ	1999-2013
Nashville, TN	1988-1988	Tulsa, OK	1987-1990