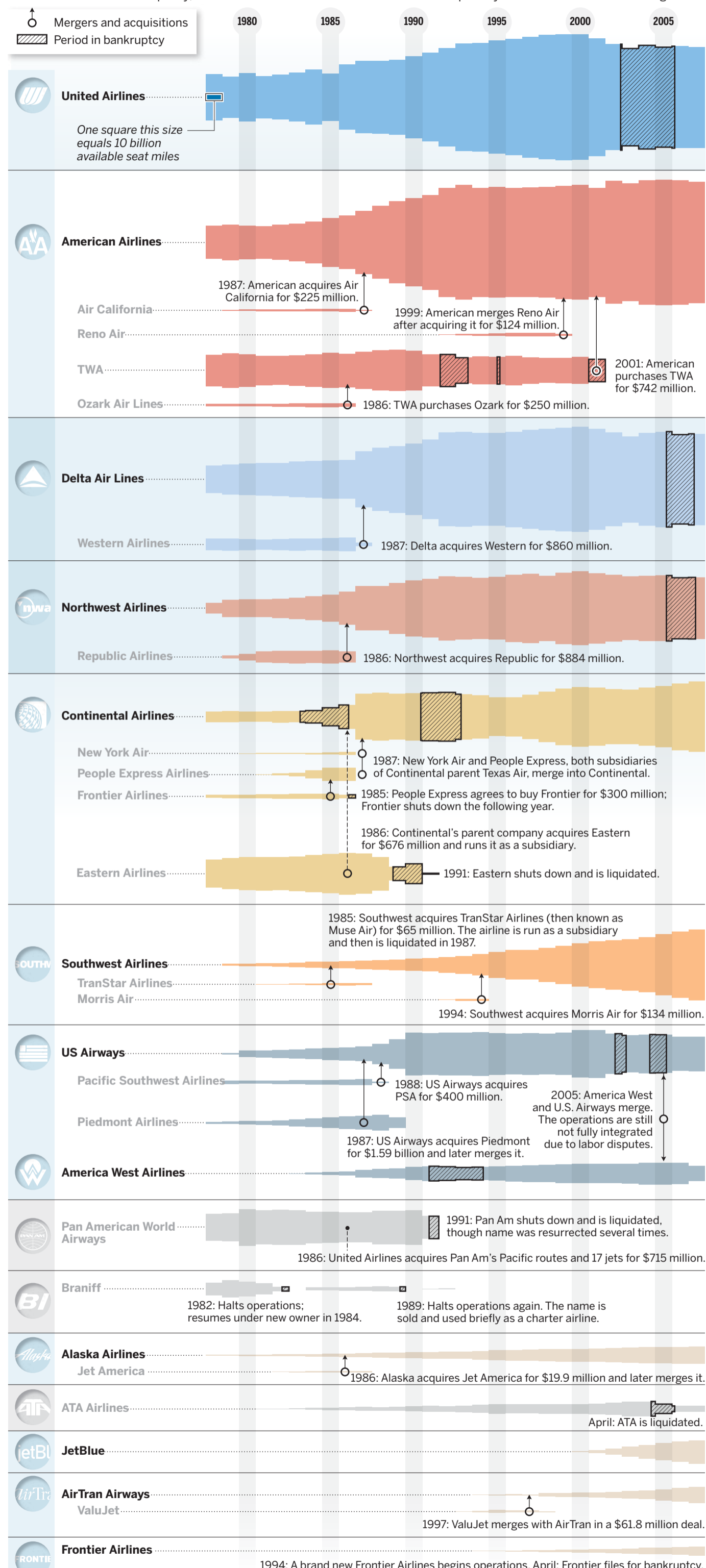


Survival of the fittest

A look at the airline industry's evolution since 1978 deregulation reveals that Delta's proposed merger with Northwest would not be the first union of its kind, but would be, by far, the largest. And if rumors of other deals are true, it won't be the last.

Major U.S. airlines—by available seat miles

The standard measure of capacity, available seat miles are the number of seats multiplied by the distance traveled for all flights.



Does not include commuter, charter or cargo airlines. SOURCES: Department of Transportation, news reports TRIBUNE GRAPHIC / Max Rust, Steve Layton