

# Improving Our Nation's Airports

These six facilities are taking their infrastructures and amenities to greater heights

By Matt Alderton



Statistics show U.S. airports are getting a real workout. The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that in 2018, domestic airlines carried some 815.7 million passengers. While that figure is down from 2017's record 848.7 million, it's still almost 90 million more flyers than were counted at the start of the decade. Not surprisingly, many of the nation's airports are feeling the strain, especially in big cities where high volume (not to mention high cost) makes it hard to engage in major construction.

Nevertheless, a number of airports in major meeting markets are undergoing massive expansions to keep up with the increasing business. The following six projects aim to provide more efficient check-in, easier

boarding and greater amenities, changes that we hope will make life easier for planners and attendees taking to the skies.

## Salt Lake City International Airport

A \$3.6 billion reconstruction project — said to be the largest such work in the history of Utah — is underway at Salt Lake City International Airport, where a brand-new terminal will welcome passengers in 2020. The building is phase one in a two-phase project to be completed by 2024. The improved facility promises “more space and convenience” thanks to easy wayfinding and moving walkways; roomy gates with ample seating and charging stations; an expanded concessions program; a dedicated meet-

and-greet area for meeting arrivals, and a plaza with a large window overlooking the airfield. And speaking of large windows: A highlight will be a 45-foot floor-to-ceiling glass wall through which passengers will be able to enjoy views of the mountains.

The original 50-year-old terminal is gradually being demolished as parts of the new complex are unveiled. Aiming for LEED Gold certification, the new facility will feature one large central terminal connected to two concourses by a passenger tunnel.

## LaGuardia Airport

Late last year, New York City's LaGuardia Airport opened a new modernized concourse in Terminal B, where passengers



Salt Lake City International Airport's new terminal (left) will debut in 2020, and LaGuardia's modern Terminal B concourse (above) already is on board.



Kansas City International Airport (left) is getting a single unified terminal in 2022.

began service here in 2017. The expanded facility is expected to take some traffic off the busy tarmacs of the region's three major airports.

### Denver International Airport

In spring 2018, DIA broke ground on a \$1.5 billion gate expansion that will add capacity to each of its three concourses. Scheduled for completion by spring 2021, the project will add a total of 39 new gates, which represents a 35 percent increase in the number of boarding positions. More passenger amenities are in the works, as well, including restaurants and shops, extra charging stations and an outdoor space where travelers will be able to take a breath of fresh Colorado air.

A separate \$1.8 billion project is underway in the main terminal and is due for completion by the end of 2021. The work includes consolidating the ticketing areas and revamping and relocating the security



Work should finish up in 2021 on Denver International's expanded concourses.

screening area. A reimagining of the Great Hall will replace the airport's existing security area with seating, new pre- and post-security concessions, a children's play area and a new welcome area for arrivals.

### Orlando International Airport

In 2018, ground was broken on the South Terminal Complex at OIA, a \$2.1 billion expansion that will include 16 new gates and the Boulevard, which the airport's ex-



Orlando International's design-forward South Terminal Complex will come online in 2020.

ecutive director Phil Brown calls "a state-of-the-art, multimedia technology corridor." Running the length of the terminal, it will feature new concessions, subtropical greenery, a baggage-handling system that will use radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology to track luggage from departure to arrival, and large windows and skylights designed to welcome passengers with a dose of Florida's famous sunshine. Construction is scheduled to wind up in 2020.

### Kansas City International Airport

In November 2017, residents of Kansas City, Mo., voted in favor of building a new terminal at KCIA. Plans call for replacing the airport's current three-building layout with a single unified terminal that will increase convenience and efficiency for passengers and airlines alike. The new facility, which airport officials call "modern and uniquely Kansas City," is scheduled to open in 2022 on the site of the existing Terminal A, which already is closed.

Highlights of the plan include a large glass atrium, separate levels for arrivals and departures, additional restrooms and 39 gates, each with spacious waiting areas. Security wait times should shrink thanks to the installation of "high throughput" devices capable of screening four passengers at a time as well as an automatic tray return, both of which promise to reduce security wait times. ■

flying American, United, Southwest and Air Canada airlines now find soaring ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, live trees, spacious restrooms, upscale stores and restaurants, an indoor park and even a children's play area. Meanwhile, JetBlue Airways in February completed modest improvements to LaGuardia's tiny Terminal A.

But the work here has only just begun. Still to come is a renovation of the rest of Terminal B, including a second concourse and the "Headhouse" — essentially a new check-in lobby — both of which will open in 2020. Terminals C and D are being replaced by a single terminal for Delta Air Lines. Opening in 2021, it promises wider concourses, larger gate areas and more seating, not to mention a new Delta Sky Club. All of this is part of an \$8 billion project that also will build a pedestrian walkway spanning the entire airport and will add a rail link to the New York City subway system.

### Stewart International Airport

This facility in New Windsor, N.Y., is in the midst of a \$30 million expansion that will benefit passengers traveling to and from New York's Hudson Valley, 70 miles north of Manhattan. Scheduled for completion in 2020, the project will expand the airport's terminal by 19,850 square feet to accommodate a new customs inspection area — something the airport currently lacks but needs thanks to an influx of international passengers aboard Norwegian Air, which