FOUR AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS TO WATCH IN 2016

News / Airports / Routes

By Benét J. Wilson

Airports across the United States are working on major construction and infrastructure projects to improve and upgrade their facilities. These projects include new and upgraded terminals, runways and taxiways, lighting and passenger amenities. AirwaysNews.com takes a look at four airports that have major projects that are ramping up in 2016.

Mike Boyd, from the Denver-based aviation consultancy Boyd Group International applauds these airport construction projects. “When I look at what airports like New Orleans, Tampa, Orlando and Los Angeles are doing, I get addled when I hear idiots talking about third world airports in the United States,” he stated. “With these four airports, we’re seeing first world planning.”

It is “blatantly untrue” that U.S. airports are falling down, said Boyd. “Statements like that are

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underscoring what these and other projects are actually doing to improve their facilities." He said.

MSY1
A rendering of the new terminal at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. (Image credits: City of New Orleans)

In early 2013, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and airport officials unveiled more than $300 million in improvements at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airportunder a modernization program. It included a new interior with a refurbished ticket lobby, expanded concourse, improved baggage claim, remodeled restrooms, updated exterior, a new car rental facility and new retail and restaurant offerings.

And on January 14, 2016, the city broke ground on the new $807 million North Terminal complex at the airport. The new 760,500 square-foot terminal will have two concourses with 30 gates, a 2,000-car parking garage, a central utility plant and a ground transportation staging area. It also includes a $72 million power plant project, $87 million for a highway addition to improve access to the airport and $17 million for an on-site hotel. The new terminal is scheduled to open on Oct. 1, 2018.

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An interior rendering of the new terminal at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. (Image credits: City of New Orleans)

Orlando International Airport is working on a $1.1 billion expansion and renovation project, the largest in the airport's history, including construction on the South Airport APM Complex and Intermodal Transportation Facility (ITF), along with enhancements at the North Terminal Facility.

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A rendering of Orlando's the South Airport APM Complex and Intermodal Transportation Facility. (Image credits: SchenkelShultz Architecture)

Projects currently underway in the North Terminal Complex include: expansion of the ticket lobbies in Terminals A & B; baggage system improvements for increased efficiency and security; renovation of curbside canopies; construction of a new central energy plant; and construction of a new north cell phone lot with restrooms.

Airside 4 improvements include expanding Customs and Border Protection facilities, adding international gates to accommodate larger aircraft and renovating restroom facilities. The airport is also replacing its Automated People Mover trains for Airsides 1 and 3.

The South Airport Complex will have increased multimodal transportation access to accommodate up to four rail systems, providing greater connectivity to the region and the state. Construction is projected to be completed by the summer 2017.

Los Angeles World Airports, which oversees Los Angeles International Airport, has been working on the $8.5 billion LAX Modernization program since 2006, which covers more than 20 individual

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projects, including terminal upgrades. Terminal 2, the second-largest at LAX, is getting major upgrades to the ticket lobby, baggage screening, baggage claim and concourse areas, as well as construction of all new concessions and upgrades of all systems (electrical, mechanical, telecom, etc.) that serve it.

LAX
A rendering of an interior at LAX Terminal 2. (Image credits: LAWA)

Southwest Airlines is undergoing a major renovation program at Terminal 1, including improvements to the passenger security screening checkpoint, the design and implementation of a new inline Checked Baggage Inspection System and baggage sorting system, upgraded hold rooms and associated building infrastructure, refurbished arrival/baggage claim area, replacement of the passenger boarding bridges, renovations to airline support office space and the replacement of aircraft paving sections and associated fuel hydrant pit locations.

LAX is also reviewing its Terminal Commercial Management agreements for developing, leasing and managing convenience retail, specialty retail, food and beverage and certain other passenger services in Terminals 1, 2, 3, 6, the Tom Bradley International Terminal and the Theme Building. Aside from TCM's the airport itself will cover costs and expenses of public seating, restrooms, common area enhancements, improvements to the terminal facilities and Theme Building. All projects are scheduled to be completed by 2020.

Tampa-main-terminal-e1456930117892
A rendering of the main terminal at Tampa International Airport. (Image credits: Tampa International Airport)

Tampa International Airport is working on a major $971 million plan to update its facility, including a consolidated rental car facility, an automated people mover, new concessions, upgraded roadways and taxiways. Back in 2011, airport officials started updating its master plan, which was approved in 2013. The plan consists of three phases of expansion to eventually accommodate 35 million passengers a year under what it calls a "build as demand dictates" approach based on passenger volume.

Phase one handles the airport's immediate needs to decongest the curbsides, roads and the main terminal. It includes a 2.6 million-square-foot consolidated car rental center, a 1.4-mile automated people mover and an expansion of the main terminal. In June 2015, the airport's governing board approved the largest concessions redevelopment plan in its history. Once the program is fully implemented in late 2017, passengers will have access to dozens of new restaurants and stores, including local brands.

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Boyd dismissed critics who push for a better airport passenger experience. "Someone said that there should be an amusement park in aredesigned LaGuardia Airport. Isn't air travel exciting enough without an amusement park?" he asked. "There are too many gadflies out there touting things like ice rinks in airports. Who wants to do a triple toe loop before flying to Omaha?"

When it comes to construction and design, airport people and engineers should be in charge, not a committee or a group like Citizens for a Better Airport, said Boyd. "These airport projects are *prima facie* evidence that we don't have third world airport plannings or systems, although that's trendy

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to say now.”

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