

Airport Improvement



Crystal Bridges Installed at Killeen-Fort Hood Regional | page 22



Dulles Concourse Gains 15 Gates | page 34



Gulfport-Biloxi Thrives in Wake of Hurricane Katrina | page 6

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Super-Size Hangars in Memphis | page 40



Dulles International Airport



Dulles Concourse Gains 15 Gates

By Nicole Nelson

The third expansion of Concourse B has proved to be a charm for Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD).

IAD's Concourse B has been built in stages with an initial section opened in 1998 followed by an expansion in April 2003. In January 2008, the latest extension opened to the public with a \$137 million, 15-gate addendum that took the concourse to its maximum footprint.

"Concourse B is really the first completed concourse that shows you more or less the model of all future concourses at Dulles," says Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) president and chief executive officer Jim Bennett.

Efficiency and Customer Service

Bennett says all aspects of Concourse B are complete except a station node for the automated underground train system that is set to debut

in 2009. That piece is scheduled to finish up at the end of summer and will finalize the facility.

But prior to the opening of the highly anticipated AeroTrain, efficiencies and customer service enhancements are already being acknowledged.

"One of the major advantages of the build-out is that several domestic airlines have been relocated to the new gates at this concourse," Bennett says. "That has freed up some gates toward the center of the concourse, which has allowed us to relocate and concentrate international flights at the center. Now the entire concourse is more efficient."

Bennett also notes that some international flights were on hardstands prior to the build-out due to limited gate availability. This is no longer the case.

"The additional gates have provided a real increase in terms of customer service," Bennett says.



Look and Feel

Bennett tells *AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT* the 15-gate build-out shares the same look and feel of the earlier stages of the concourse, but has upgraded technology and enhanced directional signage.

"We have introduced a new directional signage palette that we will be introducing over time to the rest of the airport," Bennett says, noting that additional colors, international symbols and backlit signs offer more effective directional signage to airport customers.

Another enhanced feature is state-of-the-art flight information displays.

"We have upgraded the technology with flat-screen LCDs as well as the cabinetry in which they reside," says Bennett, referring to the International Display Systems multi-user flight information display systems (MUFIDS). "These FIDS have a little fresher look than the other gate facilities at Dulles."

Beyond these two amenities, the new 15-gate expansion shares the simple box-frame construction found throughout the two-story structure.

"We basically took the original cross-section of the original Concourse B to extend the concourse," says MWAA deputy vice president for engineering Stephan Smith.

The concourse is open the width of 140 feet with hold rooms on both sides. Terrazzo floors, acoustical and screening elements, wayfinding and flight information displays basically mirror the rest of the concourse.

Facts and Figures

Project: Concourse Extension and West APM Station

Location: Washington Dulles International Airport

Size: 15 gates/240,000 sq. ft. functional space

Cost: \$137 million

Design Contractor: Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK)

Construction Contractor: Balfour Beatty Construction

FIDS Supplier: International Display Systems

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Joint Venture

Smith says the build-out is nearly transparent, much like the joint venture responsible for the construction management and design management support to the Authority. Parsons Management Consultants — Parsons Transportation Group, DMJM Aviation, PB Americas and Delon Hampton and Associates — has served MWA for nearly 20 years.

According to Parsons Management Consultants' program manager Bruce Swanson, all of the four companies worked together, yet independently, on transportation projects prior to the MWA joint venture formed in 1988.

"The joint venture was put together for this project and this client specifically," Swanson explains. "We started out in the beginning and grew together on the early program. It has turned out to be a real team effort and a real good association."

Smith says the joint venture has been a win-win in terms of providing staff augmentation and continuity to MWA through the years, with the Dulles Development program (D2) serving as a prime example. D2 encompasses the Concourse B extension, automated underground train system and other projects such as the airport's fourth runway and a new airport traffic control tower.



"One of the problems you have on a program like this with a longer duration is if you have instability in the management of the program, specifically in the tracking of funds and the global look at the schedules. That puts the agency at risk because you lose institutional memory and clarity on these multi-year projects," says Smith. "Most of the projects that we do are multi-year for construction as well as design and planning. So if you don't have that continuity throughout the life cycle of the project, you tend to lose details that can creep up on you later."



Smith says inserting a project like Concourse B into an operating airfield is always dicey in terms of estimating the impact of the operation on construction project cost and schedule.

"You have to budget accordingly and you have to have an excellent relationship with the operational side of the house: the airport operators, the airlines and all of the folks that are going to be impacted by that project, but have a somewhat limited say in how it gets built."

Smith says it all goes back to one of the good things about the continuity with the program manager: "We spent an awful lot of effort to formally and informally coordinate with the airport operators and with the airlines as we built that concourse."

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