



WELCOMING THE WORLD





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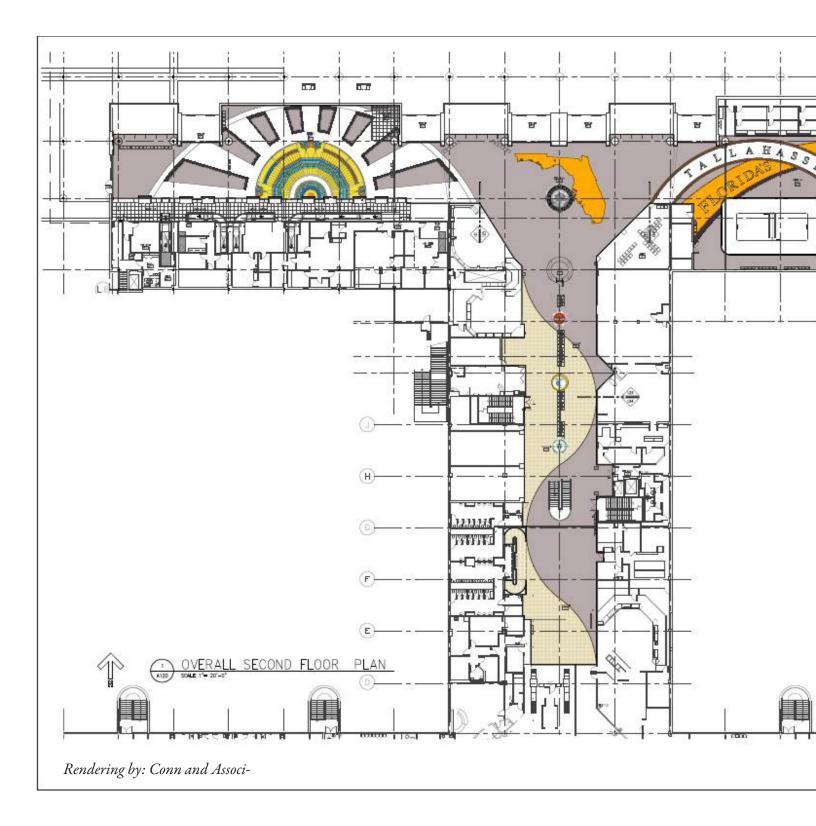
When the first municipal airport opened in Tallahassee, Florida in 1929, it had one grass landing strip. 60 years later, on December 3, 1989, the city opened the \$33 million airline passenger terminal, one and half miles southeast of the municipal terminal. With a market area of more than 1.4 million in total population, the airport remains a critical avenue for business travelers and every day passengers. A gateway to the sun, sand

In 1929, Dale Mabry Field opened as the first airport in Tallahassee, Florida. In 2009, Tallahassee Regional Airport celebrated 80 years of serving the community. Accounting for 32% of air passenger travel in the northwest Florida region, Tallahassee is now turning towards a global customer base, as they prepare to rebrand as an international airport.

and beaches of the Sunshine State, the capital city is transforming its aviation epicenter to accommodate an international fleet of flights. As Director of Aviation, Chris Curry acknowledged that the decision to go global would bring about its share of skeptics.

"One of the challenges was convincing the community that the airport was ready to move to international status," he said. "We brought together a variety of participants in the project – ranging from local to regional to national representation and the project involved working together collectively to make sure all areas was covered."

A three-year project at the cost of \$41 million, the details involve extending the north/south runway 18/36 to a length of 7,000 feet and alleviating the line of sight safety issues



pertaining to runway 9/27. The rehabilitation of 9/27 will bring Tallahassee Airport in line with 21st century facilities. From a technical aspect, challenges were inevitable from the outset.

"The main challenge with any project of this magnitude is keeping it on schedule and on budget," Curry said. "Because of the reduced length of the runway that was used, which was the 7000-foot runway when the primary runway 9/27 was closed, you also had to



manage some weight limitations associated with the aircrafts used by the airlines. When an issue involved needing more length, you had to be sensitive to the weight challenges of aircraft departing from a runway with less runway length."

Sitting on 2,749 acres of land, the airport terminal is 160,470 square feet. Equipped with free Wi-Fi, the climate controlled terminal provides a friendly atmosphere featuring comfortable seating with plug-in capacity for all your digital devices. The 700 employees who work at the airport, along with the 55 workers who manage the facility are an essential element in Tallahassee's rebranding initiative.

"I can say, for myself, working as an employee of the airport it's certainly a very exciting time here and I think it energizes us," Airport Business Services Manager Victoria







Maleszewski said. "We're very excited about all the projects that we have coming and the improvements and what we're able to offer the community. We're all working extremely hard, and at the end of the day, we're hoping to offer better service levels for our customers and our community, so it's exciting."

OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Serving approximately 176 aircraft operations per day and generating approximately 350,000 annual enplanements, Tallahassee Airport serves four major air carriers, including: American Eagle, Delta Air Lines, Silver







Airways, and US Airways all with direct flights to Atlanta, Charlotte, Fort Lauderdale, Dallas Fort-Worth, Miami and Orlando. With all the connections and capabilities afforded by these other airports to virtually every major destination in the world, Tallahassee worked with a national consultant on the designation for international status and the rebrand.

"We hired a national consultant to perform this without much influence from the airport as far as the direction that it should go because we wanted to allow the most creative thinking possible as we move forward in the process," Curry said.

"We didn't want to impose any parameters or boundaries on them because we knew they had more experience than the airport on a national arena and they had done many of these before," he continued. "The only requirements were to make sure that there was consultation with local and regional representatives in the process."

With 22 commercial airports in the state of Florida, Tallahassee will be the 19th airport with international availability. Part of the rebrand also implicates technological innova-



tion. When welcoming international guests, being tech savvy definitely has its advantages.

"We're always evaluating new technologies," Curry said. "For example, right now we of-





fer the free Wi-Fi internet service, but perhaps sometime in the near future we will offer a much faster system for those that require it because we know that there's a desire to stream music and download files, so we'd like to say that we adjust with the needs of the industry."

HOME GROWN HOSPITALITY

Working closely with both regional and local representatives, the airport, while heavily focusing on its rebranding efforts has not forgotten about its roots.

"The city encourages the use of local businesses and we personally have outreach programs at different times throughout the year to encourage local business participation,"

Curry said. "If there are businesses that come into the airport that aren't local, we assist them with local vendors that may be able to provide supplies and employment for them as well."

On September 24, 2014, Tailwinds, a master concessionaire was awarded retail, food, beverage, and coffee concessions within the airport. Enlisted to improve the passenger experience, streamline operational efficiencies, and increase non-aeronautical revenue, the Tailwind's proposal projects an annual increase of \$586,380 and plans to expand concessions post security, while developing an open and inviting central concession marketplace and updating the retail, food and beverage concepts pre-security. Slated to begin in June 2015, construction will run into



2016, with an anticipated completion date by February of next year.

"Working in conjunction with Tailwind and Conn and Associates Architects, we plan to open everything up and develop more contemporary, visually attractive and functional spaces to attract customers," Maleszewski said. "The most significant improvements will be made to the post-security Concessions, where we are creating an open and inviting central concessions market place to provide greater convenience and selection for our passengers, once they process through security."

Opened to increase visibility, the décor of the spaces will be lighter, brighter and be updated to a more contemporary, visually attractive and functional design; reflective of the industry standards and a growing capital city. With everything new going on at the airport, there is one facet that turns back the clock and offers guests coming into Tallahassee a way-back experience that adds some elegance, charm and nostalgia - shoe shining services.

"We are located in the state capital, so we have a lot of business travelers and legislators come through our airport," Maleszewski said. "And, believe it or not, this is the service that they really appreciate having at our airport."

"These folks are very high class business travelers and they pride themselves on the way they look when they're traveling and they ap-



preciate being able to get a good shoe shine in the airport," Maleszewski continued. "It is a unique offering, and he gets plenty of repeat customers."

THE FUTURE - GLOBAL GROWTH

Moving forward and closer to completing the projects will forever change the landscape of Tallahassee Airport. The sweeping changes will have a forthcoming impact and influence once the upgrading and rebranding is done. But welcoming the world and the cosmopolitan crowd that comes with it, Curry understands his role in forming new attitudes and shifting perspective.

"Building strong relationships with all of our

business partners is critical to receiving the essential 'buy-in' needed from the city and the community to keep our forward momentum going," he said. "As the director, I take every advantage to speak at community engagements and with civic groups in order to promote the airport, educate the community, and share our vision."

A huge boon for the city's economic development, Tallahassee faces marketing challenges, mainly dealing with the expectations of functioning like a larger airport in a larger city with greater demand for air service on a daily basis. Even with the projected timeline and implementation of the changes being three to five years from now, the airport still



has its persuasive and unique nuances.

"We already know we're a close and convenient airport because we are smaller – less wait time and less drive time, so that's one of the challenges that we face," Curry said. "With this rebranding and all the improvements of the airport and the international status, and at some point having some commercial international flights, we hope to keep increasing the demand for air service that our customers will utilize more."

From one-mile fun runs to a longest drive contest on the newly opened and expanded runway 9/27, Tallahassee Airport constantly explores unique opportunities to market the

airstrip. While the airport is preparing for international designation, Curry remains loyal to the local cause, never losing sight of the people and the place that makes Tallahassee so special.

"We want to enhance the value of our airport to our customers," he said. "We would like to transition the airport into an intermodal facility, one that has different types of transportation modes either located in, around, or in close vicinity to the airport. We'd like to attract businesses that are compatible with the airport to provide a large source of employment opportunity."

