Airport Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

April 16, 2024

1-2:30 p.m. Eastern

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Today's Learning Objectives

(1) Understand the key challenges and complexities airports faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, including implementing health protocols and accommodating social distancing

(2) Gain insights from interviews with airport representatives to inform future preparedness strategies for managing communicable disease outbreaks

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1.0 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available to Accredited Airport Executives (A.A.E.)

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AICP Credit Information

1.5 American Institute of Certified Planners Certification Maintenance Credits

You must attend the entire webinar

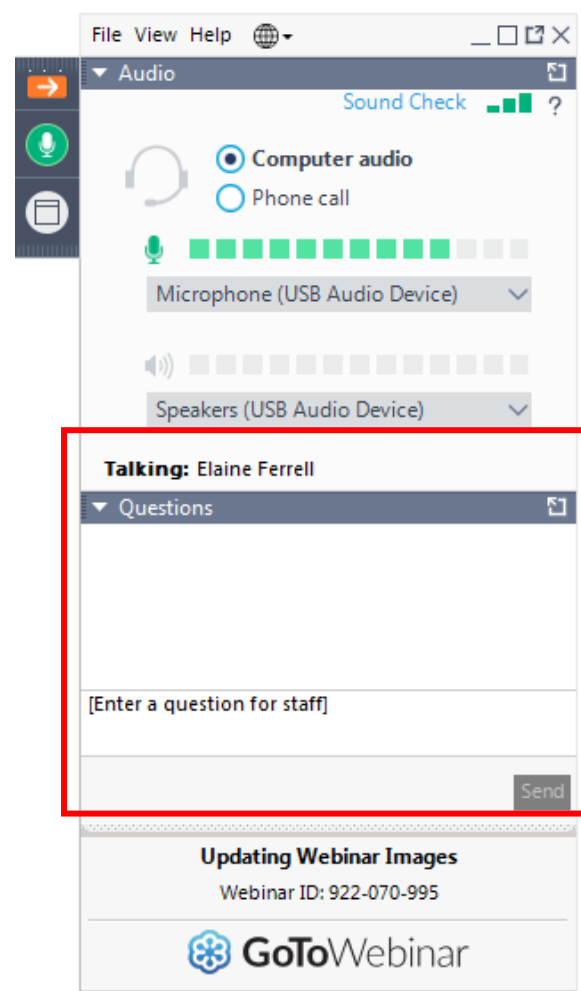Log into the American Planning Association website to claim your credits

Contact AICP, not TRB, with questions

Questions and Answers

Please type your questions into your webinar control panel

We will read your questions out loud, and answer as many as time allows

#TRBwebinar

ACRP Research Report 253

Airport Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

John Wilhelmi
Kaila Stein
Matthew Mitchell
Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG)

John Wilhelmi
Principal Investigator

→ Vice President of Environmental and Occupational Health at ERG

→ Project Manager for the ACRP Insight Event on "Airport Roles in Reducing Transmission of Communicable Diseases"

→ Technical lead for federal agency projects regarding spread of infectious diseases in workplaces

CRP Staff Support for Project 03-49

Christopher J. Hedges, Director, Cooperative Research Programs

Waseem Dekelbab, Deputy Director, Cooperative Research Programs

Marci A. Greenberger, Manager, Airport Cooperative Research Program

Brittany Summerlin-Azeez, Project Coordinator

Natalie Barnes, Director of Publications

Heather DiAngelis, Associate Director of Publications

ACRP Project 03-49 Panel

Julie Morita, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Paulo Alves, MedAire, Inc.

Clive Brown, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

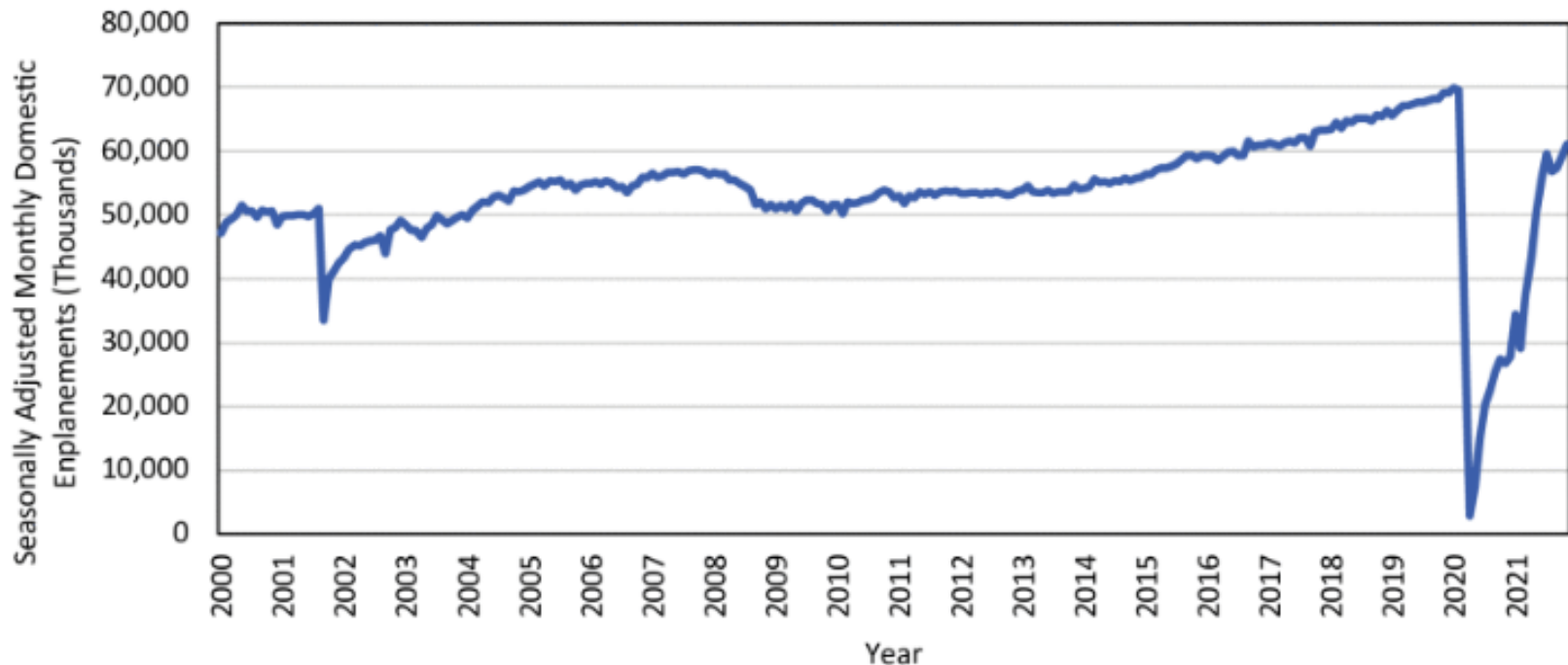Matt Cornelius, Airports Council International

Kristen Ehresmann, Minnesota Department of Health (retired)

Augustus Hudson, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Intl. Airport

Frank Miller, Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority

Mary Wilson, University of California at San Francisco

Context: COVID Impacts on Air Travel

Source: BTS 2022. Bureau of Transportation Statistics seasonally adjusted transportation data, enplanements (domestic). Data downloaded from https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/j32x-7fku.

Figure 1-1. Seasonally adjusted monthly domestic enplanements at U.S. commercial service airports, January 2000–November 2021.

Research Methods

→ Interviews with representatives from 124 commercial service airports

- 14 large hub airports
- 9 medium hub airports
- 27 small hub airports
- 74 nonhub airports

→ Interviews with 15 public health officials

→ Reviews of airport communicable disease response plans

→ Search of peer-reviewed literature

→ Coordination with project panel

Research Findings

✈ Topics addressed
  ▪ Communicable disease response plans
  ▪ Coordination with public health authorities
  ▪ Social distancing
  ▪ Masks and face coverings
  ▪ Cleaning, disinfecting, hygiene
  ▪ Screening and testing
  ▪ Infrastructure
  ▪ COVID-19 transmission incidents
  ▪ Challenges and lessons learned
✈ Further questions: john.wilhelmi@erg.com
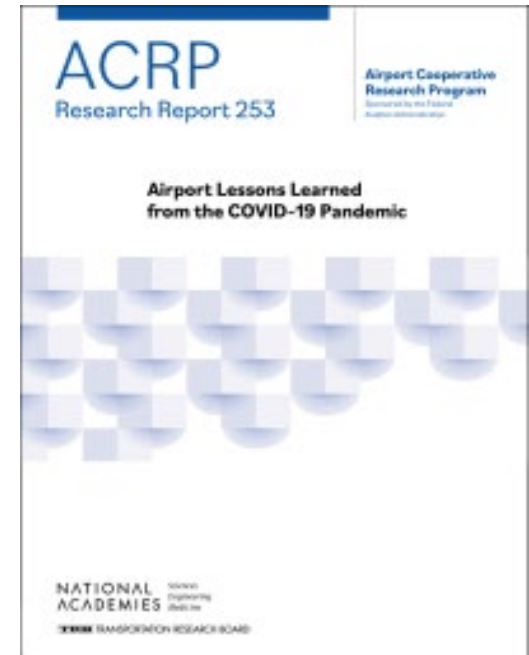
Airport Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mark H. Bishop, Chief Financial Officer
Cherry Capital Airport

The National Academies of
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Mark H. Bishop
Chief Financial Officer

→ 3 years as CFO at the Cherry Capital Airport

→ Former Cherry Capital Airport Property Manager

→ 30+ years of financial experience across various business sectors including manufacturing, oil & gas, and most recently, airport operations.

If You've Seen One Airport, You've Seen One Airport!

→ (4) commercial airlines servicing 15 non-stop destinations

→ 579,712 total passengers and 97,924 total operations in 2019

  ▪ Passenger traffic make up

    ○ 60% Leisure and 40% Business

    ○ Significant summer seasonal market with roughly 50% of traffic seen May-August

Cherry Capital Airport Operations - 2020

Total Passenger Traffic

- 2014: 397,649
- 2015: 429,364
- 2016: 451,356
- 2017: 476,767
- 2018: 500,416
- 2019: 579,712
- 2020: 295,592
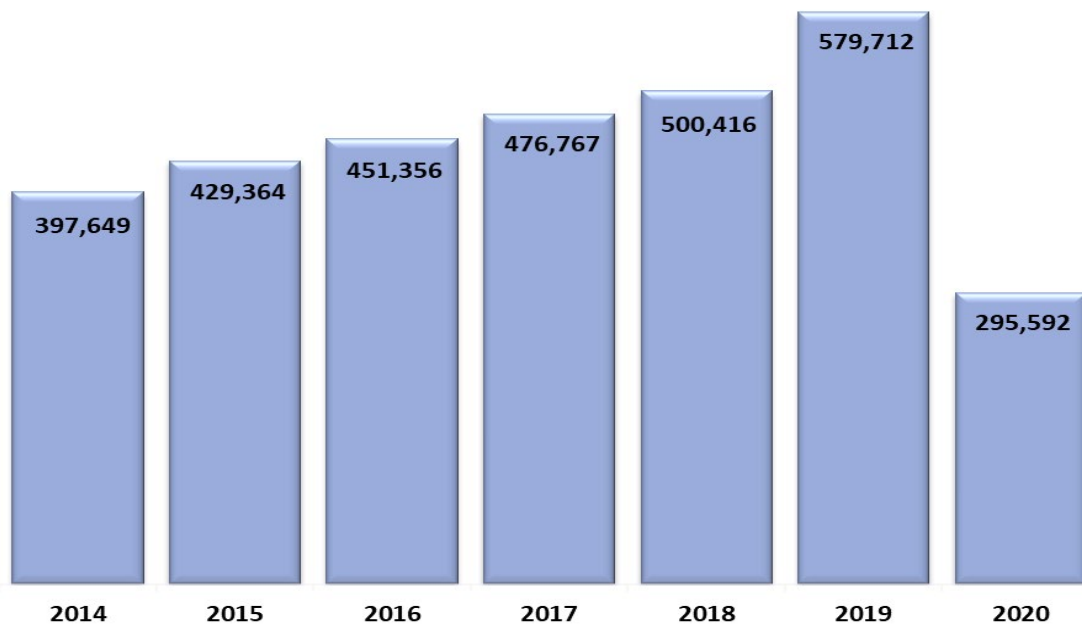
- (4) commercial airlines servicing 17 non-stop destinations
- 295,592 total passengers and 66,811 total operations
  - Leisure travelers made up majority of traffic as travel restrictions lifted

COVID-19 Focus - Cherry Capital Airport:

✈ Identifying key pandemic impacts at TVC

✈ Steps to COVID-19 Preparedness & Recovery Plan Development

✈ Defining best practices for keeping travelers and staff safe

✈ Remaining flexible in working with differing agencies at all levels

✈ Oversight and implementation of travel restrictions as required by Federal and State agencies

✈ Preparing for when passenger travel returned

COVID-19 Preparedness & Recovery

Considerations Related to Plan Development

→ Two distinct plan components

- Defining & implementing processes to ensure safe airport operations
- Preparing the airport for recovery and eventual return to "normal."

→ Leisure traveler will be first to fly again as restrictions lift (Recovery)

- Northern Michigan considered an outdoor vacation destination
- Expected that leisure passenger counts would rebound much sooner as travel restrictions lifted
- Business traveler return will be longer term, as remote and virtual work options become more of a norm

Development of TVC's COVID-19 Plan

Guidance Provided by Multiple Agencies

- ✈ <u>International</u>
  - ▪ World Health Organization
- ✈ <u>National</u>
  - ▪ Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Safety Administration, US Department of Transportation, Center for Disease Control, Occupational Safety & Health Administration
- ✈ <u>State</u>
  - ▪ MI Department of Health & Human Services, MIOSHA
- ✈ <u>Local</u>
  - ▪ Grand Traverse County Health Department, GTC JOC
- ✈ <u>Other</u>
  - ▪ Airports Council International-NA, American Association of Airport Executives, Michigan AAE, U.S. Travelers Association

Development of TVC's COVID-19 Plan

Managing Agency Guidance

→ Biggest challenge faced was being able to formulate a complete COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan while staying on top of guidance provided by various agencies

- Travel restrictions and related best practice recommendations changed on a regular basis across all agencies
- Best practices on occasion would conflict between agencies
- In cases such as these, TVC would follow a path of keeping the most robust practices in place

→ Priority remained to implement best practices which would be most effective at keeping the traveling public and airport staff safe

Pandemic Related Communications

Keeping the Traveling Public Informed

→ Traveling public looked to the airport as a key resource in providing updates related to travel

- Airport attended regular meetings with local agencies to discuss the latest findings associated with the pandemic
- Periodic meetings as necessary with both airport staff and tenants
- On-going research was conducted to better understand policies related to domestic and international travel

→ Utilization of Airport's website and social media platforms provided a key avenue for keeping the public appraised of any updates related to travel considerations

Protecting the Traveling Public & Staff

Terminal Safety Enhancements

- ✈ Increased signage promoting social distance & good hygiene
- ✈ Promotion of the practice of healthy habits to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- ✈ Installation of hand sanitizers and separation barriers
- ✈ Implementation of masking requirements
- ✈ Staff and visitor screening requirements
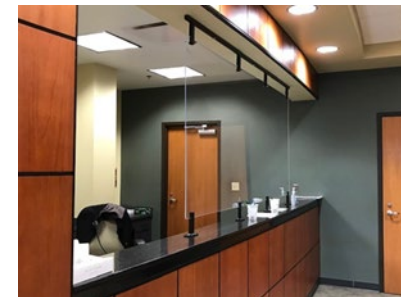
Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

- ✈ Implementation of more robust disinfecting routines to ensure that travelers and staff remain safe

In-Terminal COVID Testing Center

Michigan Travel Points Testing Program

→ Developed in partnership by the MDHHS and MDOT

- Testing facilities were set up in various locations with high volumes of travelers coming into Michigan to provide quick and cost-free COVID-19 testing

- Focus on travel Welcome Centers and Airports

In-Terminal COVID Testing Center

→ Cherry Capital Airport was first and only airport in Michigan to partner with the Travel Points Program
  - Testing made available to incoming and outgoing travelers only
  - Schedules shifted in conjunction with changes in passenger traffic levels
  - Performed over 12,000 COVID-19 tests between April 2021 & October 2022

→ Testing made available as well to airport staff and tenants on an as needed basis

→ Expanded services to provide vaccinations in October of 2021

Lessons Learned at the Cherry Capital Airport

Key Takeaways from the COVID-19 Pandemic

- ✈ Establish connections immediately with local leadership, including surrounding governmental agencies
- ✈ Prepare for frequent changes in policy as the impacts of a pandemic or something similar become more clear
- ✈ Partner with State and Local health agencies to help support their initiatives in working through the next pandemic
  - ▪ Provide space for testing and/or vaccination centers
  - ▪ Model additional support with these agencies as it relates to the traveling public

Lessons Learned at the Cherry Capital Airport

➔ Engage with all tenants on a regular basis to define expectations of the airport and ensure appropriate safety plans are in place for all that reside in the airport

  ▪ Stakeholder meetings

➔ Conduct your own research as it applies to your traveler population

  ▪ Travelers will look to the airports for travel guidance
  ▪ This includes understanding restrictions that could apply to both domestic and international travelers

➔ Most important....**Never waiver from the primary principle of protecting the health and welfare of travelers, staff, and the public**.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mark H. Bishop

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Bryan Benefiel

Deputy General Manager / CFO
Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

PRE COVID-19
ATL PRE-COVID PASSENGER TRAFFIC

IN 2019

110

MILLION PASSENGERS

ATL
BY THE NUMBERS

4,700 ACRE CAMPUS

350+ CONCESSIONS

3 FUEL FARMS

2 AUTOMATED TRAIN SYSTEMS

197 GATES

2 TERMINALS

7 CONCOURSES 6.8M SQ. FT.

9K CONSOLIDATED RENTAL CAR CENTER SPACES

33K ON-AIRPORT PARKING SPACES

28 PASSENGER CARRIERS

$3.1B CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACTUAL SPEND

3 INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS

31 CARGO CARRIERS

5 PARALLEL RUNWAYS

1.1M SQ. FT. OF CARGO

T A B C D E F
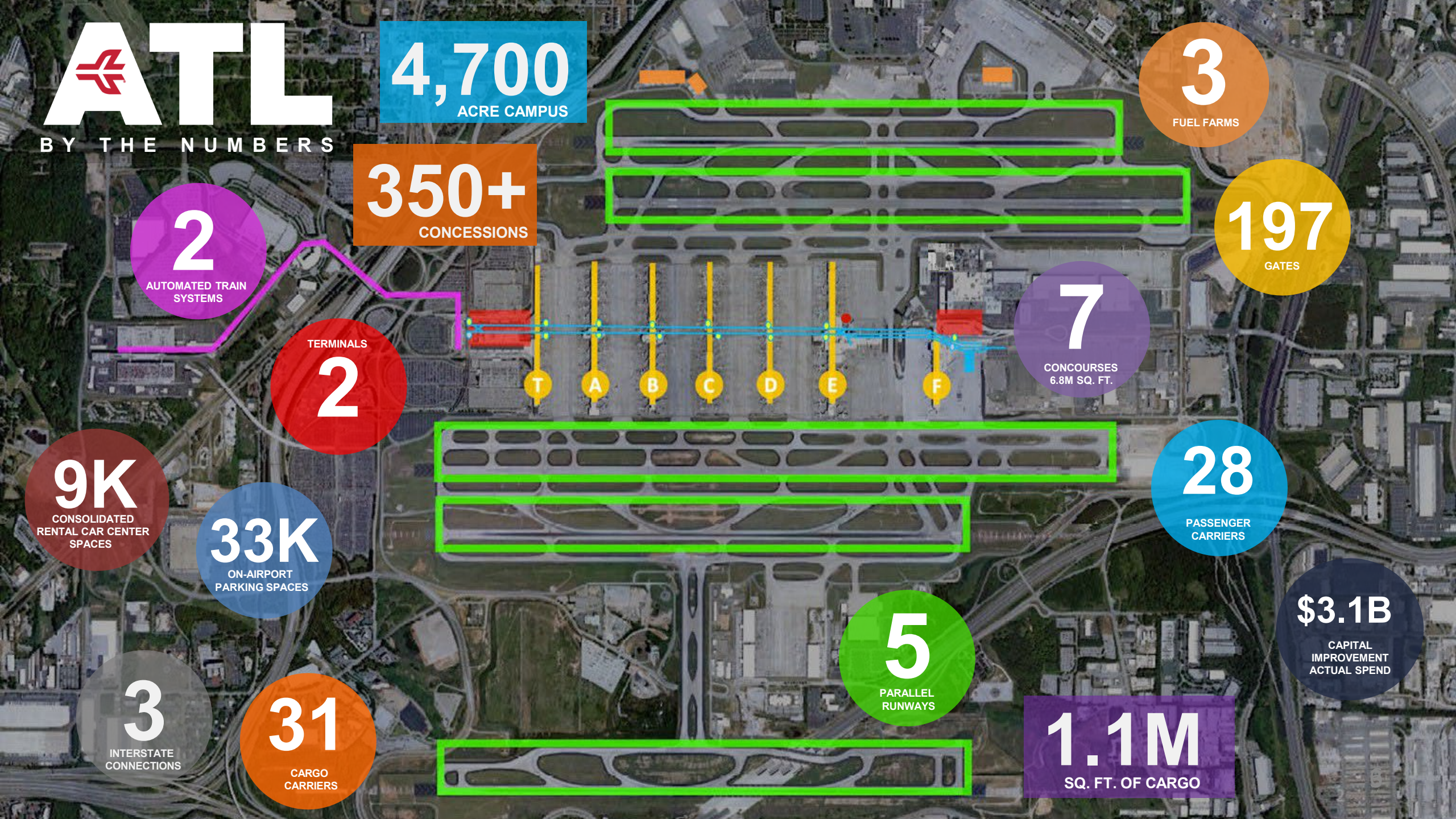
OPERATIONAL METRICS

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

	2019	2020 COVID-19 IMPACT PERIOD	2021	2022	2023
ACTUAL PAX	110M	42M	76M	94M	105M
ACTUAL FLIGHT OPS	904K	548K	707K	719K	776K
CARGO MT ACTUAL	602K	560K	694K	687K	564K
RIDESHARE	2.9M	405K	1.7M	2.5M	3.1M
TAXI	531K	143K	209K	391K	463K
FIREARMS	323	220	507	448	451
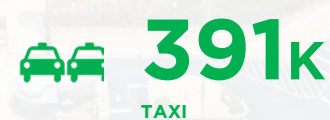
COVID-19 UNCERTAINTY
WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Enplaned Passenger Trend

Legend: FY19 Actual (Baseline - Repeats) · Original Projection · Actual · Revised Projection (Dec-20)

COVID-19 RELIEF GRANTS

SUPPORT HELPED RECOVERY

	CARES Airport	CRRSA Airport	ARP Airport	Total Airport		CRRSA Concessions	ARP Concessions	Total Concessions		Total
Awarded COVID-19 Relief Grants										
Grant Awarded	338,535	75,842	324,153	738,530		11,460	45,838	57,298		795,828
Total Awarded	338,535	75,842	324,153	738,530		11,460	45,838	57,298		795,828
Utilization of COVID-19 Relief Grants										
FY20 Actual	80,881	-	-	80,881		-	-	-		80,881
FY21 Actual	114,805	-	-	114,805		-	-	-		114,805
FY22 Actual	122,460	-	50,000	172,460		-	-	-		172,460
FY23 Actual	20,389	75,842	274,153	370,384		11,460	45,838	57,298		427,682
Balance Remaining End of FY23	-	-	-	-		-	-	-		-

POST COVID-19
ATL POST-COVID PASSENGER TRAFFIC STRONG AGAIN

IN 2023

104
MILLION PASSENGERS

COVID-19 IN PERSPECTIVE

1920s 1930s

1940s 1950s

1960s 1970s

1980s 1990s

2000s 2010s

ATL NOW

Other Events for You:

April 30, 2024

TRB Webinar: Strategies to Respectfully Address Homelessness at Airports

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- Networking opportunities
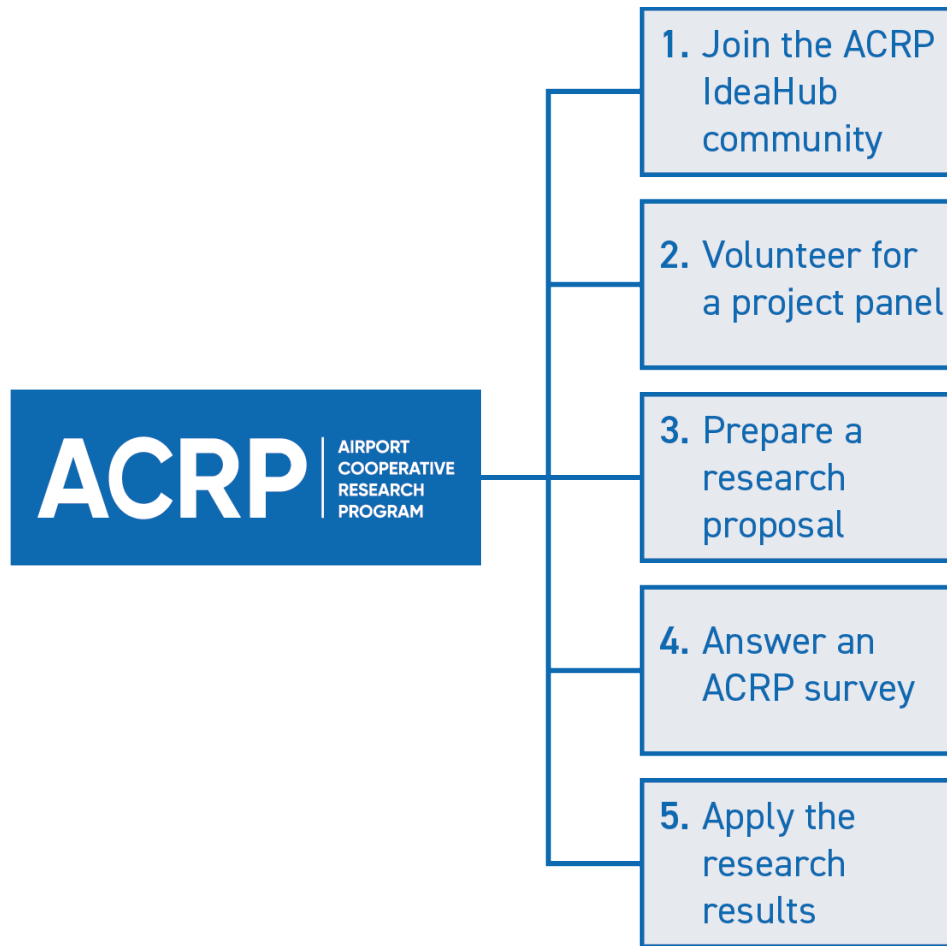- May provide a path to Standing Committee membership

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Getting involved is free!

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3. Prepare a research proposal
4. Answer an ACRP survey
5. Apply the research results

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