

INTRODUCTION

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During the 1960s, air passenger travel experienced substantial growth—as much as 8 to 20 percent annually at some airports. Based on this past trend, estimates are that U.S. airports will handle more than 250 million passengers by 1980. To meet this travel demand, some urban areas constructed large and complex airport facilities.

Since 1970, however, air passenger travel growth has slowed considerably, and many of the past forecasts may be too high. Some think that in the near future air passenger travel will increase only by 2 or 3 percent annually, and some even argue that air travel has stabilized and will increase only minimally if at all during the next 10 to 20 years.

Thus, questions are raised whether further new facilities are really needed or whether it is sufficient to direct more attention to the better use of existing facilities. Efficient use of airport landside facilities is related to many variables, all of which interact and many of which are institutional rather than technical. And, in general, institutional problems have proved to be more difficult to solve.

Although airports are still primarily modal interchange points, they have become much more. Some airports are major employment centers, and most are surrounded by intensely developed areas. Within the airport perimeter are restaurants, hotels, parking facilities, administrative centers, and other services. Though these facilities take space, they also generate much-needed revenue.

In previous years, a great deal of attention was directed toward the airside portion of the airport since it was here that most delays occurred. Now it appears that the landside portion may

have as critical an impact on the level of service and capacity as the airside. Since either the airside or the landside can be the limiter to an airport's capacity and level of service, appropriate criteria and measures of capacity and level of service are needed to ensure that programs to improve the capacity of either the airside or the landside are not negated by lack of facilities on the other side of the airport.

As a first step in the exploration of needed research and development in this vital area, this Conference on Airport Landside Capacity was convened by the Transportation Research Board at the request of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Participants were informed of airport landside issues by resource papers prepared, and they discussed these issues:

1. Identification and measurement of levels of service and capacity of airport landside elements,
2. Providing and managing airport landside capacity,
3. Constraints and their impacts on airport landside capacity,
4. Influence of airside and off-airport factors on landside capacity, and
5. Alternative methods for providing landside capacity at existing sites.

Reports by the workshop chairmen, the general and workshop resource papers, the research recommendations, and the conference findings and summary are included in this Special Report.

Conference participants represented all groups and agencies that are in some way involved in airport landside operations: airport managers, consumer advocates, concessionaires, environmentalists, transportation disadvantaged, automobile rental agency officials, architects, engineers, economists, airline company officials, ground transportation operators, labor and finance specialists, attorneys, regulators, energy specialists, federal, state, and local government officials, planners, and university researchers.

A variety of opinions were expressed during the conference sessions. And although agreement was reached on some matters, on most there were strong minority views. The conference could not produce a carefully developed plan for providing the optimum amount of airport landside capacity in the years ahead. Nor could it recommend a well-organized research program to undergird such a plan. The complexity of the problems and the limitation of time did not allow for this. But the conference did bring together those who are knowledgeable about and responsible for airport landside operations and who identified those issues that need attention and those that will likely be the most difficult to resolve.