

A New Framework for Ground Transportation at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport

The Problem

In the fall of 2015, the Phoenix City Council directed Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) to develop a new regulatory framework for ground transportation (GT) services at the airport. The previous GT framework at PHX was more than 10 years old, with only minor adjustments made in the past decade. Most importantly, the framework did not allow Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft to operate at the airport, and existing policies for GT services complicated operations and were burdensome to service providers at the airport.

The council had two primary objectives for a new GT framework: 1) enable TNCs to operate at PHX, and 2) create a level playing field where service providers incur consistent charges.

Gathering Knowledge

The assistant director at PHX at the time put together a working group to study GT policies and benchmark PHX's policies against other airports. As PHX was beginning to consider a new GT framework, ACRP released

ACRP Report 146: Commercial Ground Transportation at Airports: Best Practices. The report made its way into the hands of PHX's working group to serve as a useful resource.

ACRP Report 146 provides a comprehensive review of management programs to improve oversight and provision of commercial GT services used successfully at airports. It also presents best practices for individual types of commercial GT services. To make the report as useful as possible, its authors designed it to be applicable to all commercial service airports regardless of location, volume, customer demographics, governance structure, and financial resources. By presenting a broad range of best practices, ACRP Report 146 can help airports of any size, type, and location develop GT frameworks that best serve the unique and evolving needs of their customers.

Leveraging ACRP Guidance

For the PHX GT working group, ACRP Report 146 provided the conceptual background and

ACRP Report 146 “set the foundation that, after reading it, we felt we understood what direction we would take Phoenix Sky Harbor.”

— Tyler Maheu,
Phoenix Sky Harbor GT Plan
Working Group

underlying foundation for planning and implementing activities. Tyler Maheu, a GT expert at PHX and member of the working group, said of ACRP Report 146: “[It] set the foundation that, after reading it, we felt we understood what direction we would take Phoenix Sky Harbor.”

The report helped the working group learn about GT services, establish a methodology, define goals, communicate with other airports, and critically evaluate best practices to gauge what new technologies or principals may apply to PHX's operating environment. Furthermore, ACRP Report 146

continued on page 2

Commercial Ground Transportation at Airports: Best Practices—continued

“allowed [Phoenix Sky Harbor] to fast-track benchmarking,” said Mr. Maheu, ensuring an efficient and expeditious planning and implementation process.

PHX made a concerted effort throughout its planning process to engage with key stakeholders, including GT operators, airlines, city officials, and community members. During outreach sessions with the GT industry, PHX communicated its use of ACRP Report 146 and other documents to identify the basis for decision-making. PHX representatives shared ACRP Report 146 with GT service providers and put a link to the report on the PHX website. During later meetings with subcommittees and committees, PHX referenced the report to help provide justification for its decisions regarding the planning process.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

PHX realized several direct benefits from using ACRP Report 146; most importantly, the document helped PHX create a new GT policy to officially allow TNCs to operate at the airport. Airport staff also reviewed and identified innovative approaches to providing GT services in the report and applied them when structuring the final permit and fee system. The airport now charges all types of providers the same trip fee, dependent

on the size of the vehicle, creating a level playing field for everyone.

Other outcomes of the new GT plan include strict Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for all providers. These requirements pushed TNCs to provide accessible options through contracts with local accessible transportation companies. PHX provides background check options for all permitted operators. PHX also implemented a 10 percent discount on trip fees for dedicated alternative fuel vehicles.

PHX accomplished the targets set by the city council on June 18, 2016, the day the new policy became effective and Uber and Lyft’s permits were issued. According to Mr. Maheu, “[The] program has been successful from the perspective that our customers wanted Uber and Lyft access; it was granted, and now people are using that service non-stop.” If measuring success based on the number of trips by GT operator category, PHX has clearly succeeded in integrating TNCs into the broader commercial GT environment at the airport, thanks in part to guidance from ACRP Report 146.

One final lesson: meeting with industry and business partners is an indispensable part of the process. Mr. Maheu commented that the “most

New GT Policies at PHX: Inspired by ACRP Report 146

- Official framework for TNC operation at PHX
- Consistent trip fee for all provider types
- Strict ADA requirements for all providers
- 10 percent trip fee discount for dedicated alternative fuel vehicles

beneficial part, and most important part, is the outreach to the affected businesses. [It is] good for you, good for them, and good for the community.” Using a resource like ACRP Report 146 can help airport decision-makers understand the landscape and approach stakeholders from common ground.



New ride-share pickup location at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPONSORSHIP: This work was sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and was conducted in the Airport Cooperative Research Program, which is administered by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

DISCLAIMER: The opinions and conclusions expressed or implied in ACRP publications are those of the research agencies. They are not necessarily those of the Transportation Research Board or the program sponsors.