What Airport Travelers Really Want

by William Brooks, PE

(NAPS)—Here's good news for travelers: Enhanced customer service is paramount for business and leisure travelers and savvy airports are making it a top priority. Through innovative design and technology, airports can evolve into destinations that accommodate sophisticated customers with hassle-free air travel and shorter wait times. Here are four hints that can take them far:

• **Getting there**—For many airport users, especially leisure travelers who fly infrequently, navigating to and through an airport can be stressful. While providing efficient ground transportation and transit access to airports is essential, it's generally not under the control of the airport. Mobile phone navigational technology, smart parking technology and, soon, autonomous vehicles, however, should improve airport access.

• **DIY self-service**—At self-check-in kiosks, passengers can expedite check-in and use mobile or printed boarding passes instead of standing in line at the ticket counter. Then, they can proceed to the self-bag check, weigh their own bags, print bag tags, place tags on their bags and drop their bags onto the baggage belt.

According to the America THINKS survey by HNTB, more than 55 percent of travelers check in online. Half of the remaining passengers use e-kiosks in the ticket lobby. Less than 22 percent interact with agents. Clearly, passengers choose saving time over traditional customer service.

• **Staying connected**—In this digitally connected world, consumers want to leverage the full power of their mobile devices throughout their entire journey. To satisfy the growing demand for free-flowing power, the HNTB-designed San Diego International Airport Terminal 2 features 1,600 USB-enhanced power ports.

• **Faster to the plane**—Airport terminal design architects,

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Airports offering more amenities and less wait time are increasingly popular places to go to—and from.

working with the Transportation Security Administration, are creating efficient, more-relaxed and easier-to-manage passenger screening checkpoints. While much still remains to be done, advances include enhanced lanes for the "TSA Pre" program, comfortable flooring for shoeless passengers, post-screening areas where passengers can reassemble their items, and more-efficient security screening equipment design.

Airport design that effectively uses technology to improve the customer experience can address what air travelers say is their biggest frustration: waiting. Innovations that improve travelers' ability to navigate the terminal, reduce wait and transit time, ensure passenger safety and improve their overall travel experience will benefit millions of passengers annually, as well as the economy and the environment.

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