

# METROPOLITAN Airport News™

OCTOBER 2024

*The Journal of the Metropolitan New York Airport Community*

## Friendly Skies for All

The Port Authority's Commitment to  
Inclusivity & Accessibility at Our Airports

**Also Inside:**

**Sarrah Khan**

*Agence Architecture + Engineering P.C.*

**Midwest Express: The Best Care in the Air**

**One-Day Visit to Annecy, France**

***Airport Employment, Upcoming Events, & Aviation News***



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**PUBLISHER**

*Kathryn Bliss*  
kbliss@metroairportnews.com

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

*Julia Lauria-Blum*  
jblum@metroairportnews.com

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

*Raymond F. Ringston*  
rringston@metroairportnews.com

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

*Beverly Holder*  
bholderphoto@gmail.com

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

*Roberta Dunn*  
rdunn@metroairportnews.com

**ADVERTISING**

*Edward J. Garcia*  
egarcia@metroairportnews.com

**EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS**

*Tanya Austin*  
taustin@metroairportnews.com

*Maureen Katz*  
mkatz@metroairportnews.com

*Jonathan Katz*  
jkatz@metroairportnews.com

*Robert G. Waldvogel*  
robertw@metroairportnews.com

**METROPOLITAN  
AIRPORT NEWS**

JFK International Airport  
PO Box 300877  
Jamaica, NY 11430  
Tel: (347) 396-0904  
info@metroairportnews.com

[www.metroairportnews.com](http://www.metroairportnews.com)

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Welcome to the October issue of the *Metropolitan Airport News*. The Fall season is upon us, the days are getting shorter and chillier with those bursts of warmth that can be felt throughout the day, reminding us that summer was not too long ago. The airports are buzzing with travelers, construction, road re-routing, and the everyday activities that make this region one of the busiest in the world; we work here, so we may get desensitized to all of it. When you read this month's feature, you may see the adventure of travel from a different perspective.



This month's issue features the design elements, spaces, and programs presented throughout JFK, LGA, and EWR airports, specifically for travelers who may need additional support to ensure a pleasant experience at these airports on their way to their next adventure.

The thoughtful details put into developing these programs are incredible. It may be as simple as a quiet space to wait for your flight, opportunities to simulate boarding the plane and taking your seat, or indoor and outdoor spaces for service animals. Technology is at the forefront of possibilities for aiding passengers safely through the terminal. There are programs where airport and airline staff and Federal Partners run through mock scenarios, including airport arrival, TSA checkpoints, waiting at the gate, and boarding the plane. This program helps future travelers take comfort in practicing the procedures so their actual day of travel runs smoothly. Travel is stressful, even for those who do it quite often. It can bring about distress to so many, but it's a comfort to know that our local airports are doing all they can to ease the passenger experience, with the goal being a stress-free, safe, and expedient visit through the terminal.

Local airport events are happening in full force: there are luncheons with excellent honorees and speakers, galas, dinner parties, charity functions, and everything in between. Take a look at our up-to-date events page to be sure you're in the know!

I hope you enjoy the issue. If you would like to connect with us to offer ideas, share happenings, or just introduce yourself, please email [info@metroairportnews.com](mailto:info@metroairportnews.com). We look forward to hearing from you.

I'll see you around the airports!

Katie Bliss, *Publisher*  
kbliss@metroairportnews.com



**ON THE COVER**

The Water Feature at LaGuardia Airport provides a calming three-minute water and light show for all guests to enjoy and can be found in Terminal B, post-security on level 4 of the Arrivals & Departures Hall.

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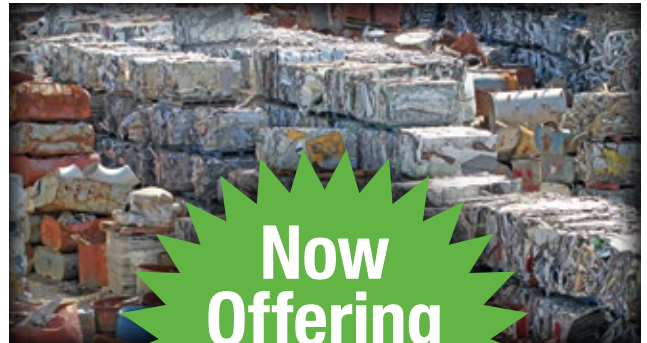
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# FAST FIVE

“Fast Five” is a succinct Q&A examining topical airport subjects of importance to the interviewee.



## Sarrah Khan

*Principal Engineer & Co-Founder, Agencie Architecture + Engineering P.C.*

Sarrah is the Founder and Principal Engineer of Agencie, where she leads the company's engineering team. Agencie is a design practice that integrates architecture and engineering into a single solution. Agencie's award-winning portfolio includes over 1,000 buildings across sectors, including Aviation, Civic, Hospitality and Residential. As the lead of an MBE and WBE practice, Sarrah has been fortunate to collaborate with extraordinary partners. Her most recent collaboration is on John F. Kennedy International Airport's \$9.5B New Terminal One (NTO), the largest infrastructure project in the U.S. Previously, Sarrah was the Founder and Lead Engineer of Urban Umbrella, the innovative scaffolding company. She pioneered the design of the Urban Umbrella, which was the first alternative to the standard New York City sidewalk shed in over 50 years. Prior to founding Agencie and Urban Umbrella, Sarrah worked for Buro Happold on geometrically complex grid shells. She also engineered the expansive glass roofs at the United States Institute for Peace and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. An active thought leader, her work has been featured in various publications, including the *New York Times*, *Globe and Mail*, and NBC. A lifelong teacher, she has lectured at Yale University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Columbia University. [www.agenciogroup.com](http://www.agenciogroup.com)

### 1 How did your interest in civil engineering begin, and what led you to form Agencie?

Before I even knew what civil engineering was, I knew I liked to solve problems. I've enjoyed tinkering and figuring things out since I was a child. Civil engineering is all about ingenuity—creating solutions to challenges to make places work better. That could be spanning a bridge across a river, transporting water through the desert, or finding ways to improve cities. Agencie (founded in 2007) came from my desire to combine the ingenuity of civil engineering with the beauty of design. Agencie means to “have the ability and power to control outcome”. By unifying engineering and architecture, Agencie delivers creativity with the technical ingenuity to truly transform buildings and spaces.

### 2 Can you share some functional highlights that will make NTO accessible for all travelers, including those with disabilities?

At Agencie, we see sidewalks differently. We see their potential to uplift spaces. By flipping the narrative of gritty, dark, wet sidewalks and taxi lines on its head, we instead created stylish and dynamic spaces. These light-filled areas are now welcoming and accessible. They integrate structure, signage, and light in a graceful and inviting way that engages and supports all travelers.

### 3 Tell us about your role in reconstructing the \$9.5 billion project at NTO.

We're proud to play a role in the incredible redevelopment at JFK Airport. This is our hometown, and the New Terminal One project we're currently working on is the largest single infrastructure project in the United States. The building's signature Headhouse space creates an unmistakable experience in transitioning from

the outside deep into the interior. The skylight and facades play a significant role, with exposed structural steel and details setting the scene. Agencie was responsible for engineering the secondary steel for the skylights here and the facades and structures at the Clerestories, Canopies, Lounges, and Food Court.

### 4 Is there a specific project at NTO that you felt most inspired by?

Working on the canopies at JFK Airport feels like a continuation of my design of the Urban Umbrella. This reimagines traditional sidewalk scaffolding, transforming it from dreary and intrusive structures into light, stylish spaces. Of course, they're also engineered to offer the necessary protection and meet required regulations. I'm inspired by banal, urban spaces! I see the opportunity to create beautiful, enduring landmarks in their place.

### 5 With women making up only 17% of civil engineers, what advice can you offer young women considering a career in this field?

Original thinking is what is required in this career. Having a different perspective is a strength. So firstly, I'd tell a young female engineer to believe in herself and her ideas. When it comes to finding the right place to build your career, seek out the environments that are genuinely inclusive. Those businesses are out there, so find them and grow in a supportive environment where your input is welcomed and encouraged.

Agencie, was fortunate to benefit from the Port Authority's MWBE program. Along with NTO, they actively sought to support the advancement of woman-owned firms and facilitated a meaningful engineering role for us in this large, impactful project. So I have to say, never stop seeking opportunities. ■

# COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

## A Legacy In Imagery and Text

Over the course of nearly 25 years, much of my work has been about aviation history and how both aviation and, unfortunately, war brought about previously unheard-of opportunities for American women during the Second World War. In researching the history of the over 350,000 women who served our country in uniform and the six million women who took jobs in factories and other civilian capacities on the U.S. Homefront, any serious researcher can tell you of the unlimited variety of rabbit holes that you will be led down to get to the heart of a story, and the branches that often lead you in different directions.

Away from the topic of aviation, this occurred as I was delving deeply into the story of women who served in the Red Cross in



Europe during World War II. This led me to a book that I read about the more than 120 American women who were accredited as war correspondents; women who documented wartime experiences and informed American citizens at home of the human devastation of the conflict. In addition to the accredited women war correspondents, female journalists remained on the home front, documenting how the country changed dramatically under wartime conditions. And they did it through the lens of their cameras and the tapping of their typewriter keys.

In May 2014, I curated a permanent exhibit at the American Airpower Museum entitled “Women Who Brought the War Home.” The exhibit tells the story of these women and the legacy they left behind as documentarians of war, whose implications are still felt today.

The exhibit is set up in a canvassed field tent and includes a mannequin depicting a female war correspondent in an authentic encampment surrounded by period memorabilia, such as a vintage typewriter and a Rolleiflex camera, on loan from the late WWII photojournalist Nestor Epstein. Adjacent to the encampment are the pictures and biographies of nine featured war correspondents and photojournalists, with five of the nine being New Yorkers, including Margaret Bourke White and Lee Miller, who both documented the liberation of Buchenwald and Dachau.

Inside the encampment are panels with photographs obtained from the National Archives, and beside them, a monitor with a streaming presentation showcasing images of their riveting reports and compelling photography.

Yesterday, I went to see the movie ‘Lee’ at the Cinema Arts Center in Huntington, in which war correspondent and photographer Lee Miller is portrayed exceptionally by actress Kate Winslet. Winslet spent eight years working to bring Lee’s untold and compelling story and her wartime photography to life. It was powerful, emotional, and unforgettable, and a story that should be told, seen and always remembered.

The movie brought tears to my eyes, and as difficult as much of the subject and imagery was to view, once again, from a curator’s point of view, I was grateful to have gone down that rabbit hole ten years ago and to play a small part in sharing the untold story of the women whose imagery and text will remain imprinted in my mind, and hopefully always in the minds of the American people. ■

*Julia Lauria-Blum*

Julia Lauria-Blum, *Editor-in-Chief*  
jblum@metroairportnews.com

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# Friendly Skies for All

The Port Authority's Commitment to Inclusivity & Accessibility at Our Airports

**JULIA LAURIA-BLUM**

[jlblum@metroairportnews.com](mailto:jlblum@metroairportnews.com)

Airports are dynamic, fast-moving, and complex environments that can be stressful for even the most seasoned, stalwart traveler. They are gateways that serve as immersive centers for diverse people of varying ages, cultures, languages, and backgrounds, including people with visible or non-visible physical and cognitive disabilities.

Each traveler's journey may present a unique set of hardships. For people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, for those with physical disabilities who may struggle with mobility, and those with medical challenges who scramble to find their

bearings in a large, crowded, over-stimulating complex, the airport experience can be overwhelming to the point where air travel is seen as an unimaginable option.

There is a heightening awareness that every traveler along their journey deserves an airport experience that is hospitable, accessible, and accommodating, be it seniors who may be frail or affected by dementia, an anxious traveler looking for a comfortable space to decompress in, people in need of sensory features that will improve their airport experience, a person traveling with a service animal, or a family traveling with small children or those with special needs.

As awareness around accessibility and inclusivity has evolved, airports are some of the most adaptable, well-suited spaces

for the implementation of universally accessible provisions and inclusive design for all people.

Acknowledging the needs of all air travelers, inclusive and functional spaces furnished with accessible provisions and user-friendly resources create a sustainable and resilient environment that prioritizes the needs of both people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

In creating an inclusive environment, airports are required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination towards people with disabilities and implementing accessibility measures in public accommodations.

The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ) is committed to creating inclusive and supportive environments in their airport facilities and workplace for people with disabilities or who identify as neurodivergent, including those with autism. The agency is dedicated to ensuring these spaces are accessible, accommodating, and supportive, and it has launched several programs aimed at raising awareness and empowering both patrons and employees. For employees, the Port Authority Abilities Network (PAAN) acts as a resource for disability-related matters and aims to build awareness, maximize potential, and empower employees with and without disabilities.

“Accessibility is a critical part of the Port Authority’s mission to create world-class airports, where state-of-the-art technology and thoughtful design will make travel easier and less stressful for passengers of all ability levels,” said Port Authority Executive Director, **Rick Cotton**.

On the Port Authority’s website ([www.panynj.gov](http://www.panynj.gov)) is a ReciteMe Accessibility toolbar, accessed by clicking an ‘Accessibility Tools’ button at the top of each page. Each respective airport page has a list of information regarding accessibility services tailored to the specific airport. This enables users to customize their interaction with the site, such as by providing a screen reader, reading assistance, changing text by size, color, or font, or translating more than



100 languages, including 35 languages for text-to-speech.

The Port Authority also plans to test an AI-driven automatic sign language translator with a photo-realistic synthetic signer to provide online accessibility information for all of its airports. It maintains an accessibility guide where passengers can find airport-specific information and the agency’s supplemental accessibility requirements.

Externally, programs like **The Sunflower Lanyard** are available across all PANYNJ airports and obtainable at their welcome centers. The Sunflower Lanyard allows passengers with hidden disabilities

(such as Autism, PTSD, ADHD) to discreetly alert airport staff that they might need help navigating through the airport. This initiative is part of a broader effort that includes sensory rooms at Newark Liberty and LaGuardia airports and plans for enhanced sensory spaces at JFK, ensuring their facilities exceed accessibility requirements.

From tranquil sensory and wellness rooms to wheelchair assistance, specialized security lanes, and assistance for people who are deaf or blind, many accessible provisions are presently in place at Port Authority of NY & NJ airports, and more are to come, including:

- **Artificial Intelligence Remote Assistance (AIRA)** is a mobile app designed for travelers with low vision or people who are blind to navigate the airport independently with the assistance of a Live Remote ‘Agent’. Once the app is downloaded, the ‘Agent’ will assist passengers in knowing what is in front or near them using the camera on their smartphone. The mobile app can be downloaded at [www.aira.io](http://www.aira.io)
- Family suites and all-gender and accessible restrooms are available at all Port Authority airports.
- Sensory rooms that provide a refuge for travelers, particularly people with autism and sensory processing complications.
- **Service Animal Relief Areas (SARA)** – low maintenance, ADA accessible areas with cleanable turf, specialized exhaust

**Continued On Page 12**



A passenger using AIRA technology, an app for persons with vision impairment or low vision,

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REMOTE ASSISTANCE (AIRA)

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ventilation, a hand wash sink, waste bag supply and disposal.

John F. Kennedy International, Newark Liberty International, LaGuardia, and New York Stewart International airports accommodate passengers traveling with service animals by offering outdoor and indoor service animal relief areas.

■ **TSA Cares Program** – This Transportation Security Administration’s dedicated helpline allows passengers to request assistance traveling through the TSA screening checkpoint at Port Authority airports. Passenger Support Specialists are TSA officers who have received advanced training in assisting passengers with disabilities, medical, or other circumstances through the screening checkpoint. To request support, passengers can submit an online form via [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) at least 72-hours in advance of travel or by calling TSA Cares at (855) 787-2227

■ Transportation navigation software allows individuals to share appropriate information with a third party to enhance efficiency and safety.

■ Wellness rooms are acoustically sound spaces designed with co-efficient-rated ceilings, noise reduction, and sound insulation. They are furnished with softly blended tones, natural elements, and aesthetics that provide a quiet, comfortable



PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

The Pre-Security Sensory Room located in Newark's Terminal A.

space with ambient lighting for travelers who need a place to relax away from the noise and congestion of an airport.

■ **The Seeing Eye** – This philanthropic organization’s mission is to enhance the independence, dignity, and self-confidence of blind people through the use of Seeing Eye® dogs. Collaborating closely with the Port Authority (PANYNJ), the TSA, and United Airlines, The Seeing Eye has been training guide dogs annually at Newark Liberty Airport for over two decades.

■ **Wings for Autism/Wings for All**

– Special needs accommodations extend to the overall airport experience. Wings for Autism/Wings for All events, sponsored by **The Arc of the United States**, give families and aviation professionals the confidence to take to the skies by providing airport rehearsals and a presentation on aircraft features and in-flight safety protocols. Chapters of The Arc throughout the country, local partners, airports, airlines, and TSA personnel work collaboratively to design and carry out each Wings event. During a Wings rehearsal, participants check in to receive boarding passes, proceed through the TSA security checkpoint, wait in the boarding area, and board an aircraft (that does not take off). This helps to alleviate some of the stress that people with autism and other Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families experience and learn about how their loved ones will react to different stimuli in an airport ([www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)).

## Newark Liberty International Airport

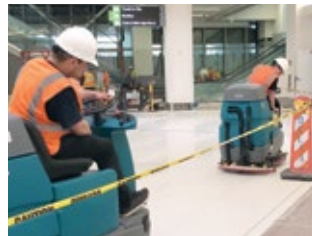
The Pre-Security Sensory Room located in Newark’s Terminal A provides a refuge from the stress of air travel. Created for neurodivergent travelers and people on the autism spectrum, the PANYNJ designed the room with the architecture and design firm PGAL and in consultation with leading experts from the **Anderson Center for Autism**, which certified the space and

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The Arc of the United States TSA Wings for Autism/Wings for All traveler rehearsal.

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provided training to terminal staff. Echoing a New Jersey sense of place, colorful carpeting and soft textures suggest flowing water, a grassy shore, a sandy beach, and bright saltwater fish swimming in a large tank. Soft, warm light radiates from slabs of pink Himalayan salt. The pre-security sensory room can help prepare travelers in Terminal A for the next steps in their journey, and through the TSA Cares program, they can wait for a TSA passenger support specialist in the sensory room and can exit through the room's back door for a separate TSA screening line for a calmer experience.

The PANYNJ is also working on a second complementary sensory room in the same terminal, located past security, that will serve as a bookend for a smooth and stress-free airport journey for individuals and families who may need a grounding space and room to help overstimulated travelers a place to decompress. The Post-Security Sensory Room is expected to be completed later in the year at Newark Liberty Airport. It will replicate the on-board airplane experience with furnished seats, seatbelts, and faux windows, as well as typical entertainment monitors and cabin lighting that create a calming pre-flight rehearsal experience, especially for first-time travelers and those who rarely fly.

Additional features at Newark include:

- **Terminal A** – Pre-security Sensory Room, Indoor pet relief areas.
- **Terminal B** – Family restrooms with adult changing tables, a dog run & indoor pet relief areas.
- **Terminal C** – Partnership with The Seeing Eye
- **Terminal A & C** – Family restrooms with adult changing tables are underway
- Hearing loops are available at Terminal A guest experience desks and the Terminal B & C Welcome Centers at Arrivals Level 1.
- Newark Liberty International staff receive regular training in assisting those with vision disabilities through a 30-year partnership with The Seeing Eye, Inc. ([www.seeingeye.org](http://www.seeingeye.org)). The organization trains puppies for future roles as guide dogs and trains airport staff to aid travelers. The Port Authority and representatives from the U.S. Transportation Security



The JFKIAT Aviramp mobile jetbridge is a product designed by 'Aviramp' that allows all passengers to ascend/descend a ramp from the main aircraft door.

Administration and United Airlines teamed with volunteers from The Seeing Eye and Newark Liberty and recently welcomed 220 dogs and 265 volunteers over two training sessions in Terminal C. The sessions were part of a special program to train the next generation of puppies to be guide dogs, assisting people with low vision or blindness in navigating airports.

## LaGuardia Airport

- **Terminal A** – Family restrooms with adult changing tables.
- **Terminal B** – Accessibility features for guests with hearing, vision, and mobility disabilities, such as hearing loops at all guest desks, intuitive departure board displays, accessible assistance at drop-off and check-in points, color-coded wayfinding across the terminal, a calming seating area with plants and foliage.

These features helped Terminal B become the first airport terminal in the U.S. to receive a gold rating, the highest, in the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) program.

Following this certification, Port Authority Executive Director, Rick Cotton said, "Among all the accolades received by Terminal B, we are particularly proud that the new terminal is the first in the nation to be awarded Gold certification by the Rick Hansen Foundation."

- **Terminal C** Sensory rooms help overstimulated travelers find a place to decompress.

Just beyond security, Delta Air Lines' sensory room includes soft lighting, bean bag chairs, and a small aircraft mock-up to help passengers familiarize themselves with air travel before their flight.

## John F. Kennedy International Airport

Each terminal has curbside unloading areas for baggage and passengers, usually near the airline entrance door, with wheelchair-accessible entrances. Wheelchair services are available, and arrangements may be made with airlines at least 24 hours in advance of travel to confirm assistance with baggage check-in, ticketing, and movement to the gate area. Skycaps are available to assist with luggage.

The terminals and parking lots at JFK are divided into five areas, each specified by a separate color. Parking spaces for customers with restricted mobility are located in each parking lot near the terminal entrance, subject to availability. To utilize a discount, drivers must enter the lot through the "Ticket" lane, pull a ticket, and request the courtesy discount by pressing the "Help" button and speaking with an attendant at the exit. Official license plates

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**Continued From Page 14**

issued by a municipality or state of residence must be prominently displayed to park in the ADA Restricted Mobility spaces.

At JFK, the AirTrain is fully ADA-compliant and has elevators, escalators, and wheelchair locations on each vehicle. Braille signs, tactile platform warning surfaces, and destination announcements are available for passengers with low vision or who are blind. Visual paging is also available for passengers who are unable to hear announcements.

Airport Customer Experience Specialists (in red uniforms) are available upon arrival and at the Welcome Centers to assist passengers. If additional assistance is needed, call (718) 244-3563 Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM EST or visit [us.qrideo.me/jfk/assist#0](https://us.qrideo.me/jfk/assist#0) for virtual assistance Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 12 AM EST.

Accessibility at T4 (JFK International Air Terminal) includes:

■ ADA-compliant restrooms, water fountains, and relief areas for service animals.

■ **Jetweels Wheelchairs** – JFKIAT is the first airport terminal in the nation to offer Jetweels wheelchairs, non-metallic, lightweight, and ergonomic wheelchairs designed to improve the travel experience for passengers who need wheelchair assistance. This initiative was launched through the Terminal 4 Airlines Consortium (TFAC) partnership.

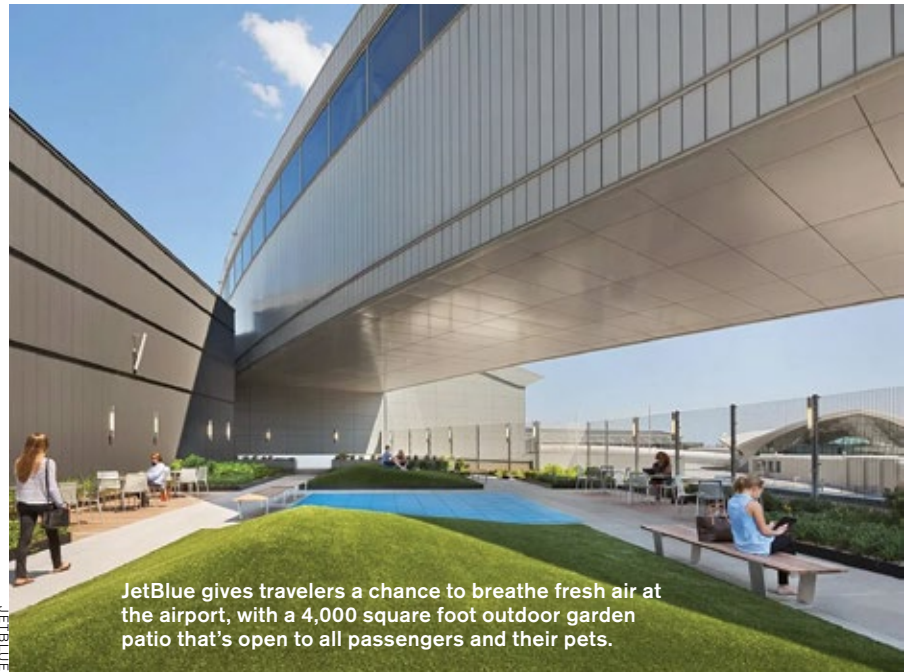
■ **Arrivals Accessibility Meet & Greet** – Together with airlines at JFK and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), passengers are provided meet and greet services at the gate for people with hidden disabilities. Requests for this service may be made at least 72 hours in advance of arrival at [www.jfkt4.nyc](http://www.jfkt4.nyc).

### A Vision for the Future:

#### Accessibility and inclusion at JFK through redevelopment

As JFK International Airport transforms into a unified, world-class international gateway, the 2.4 million sq. foot state-of-the-art New Terminal One (NTO) will anchor the south side of the airport and is being built on the sites of Terminal 1, 2, and the former Terminal 3.

In advance of the New Terminal One



JetBlue gives travelers a chance to breathe fresh air at the airport, with a 4,000 square foot outdoor garden patio that's open to all passengers and their pets.

(NTO) completion, with its first phase expected to open in 2026, **Jennifer Aument**, Chief Executive Officer of The New Terminal One, said, “We all have family and friends who have left the world of travel and adventure because navigating airport terminals became too overwhelming. Our team at the New Terminal One is creating a world-class experience that is also inclusive of all travelers’ needs, so customers who need additional support will feel cared for on every step of their journey.”

The New Terminal One (NTO) amenities and features for Passengers Requiring Assistance (PRA) will include the following:

- Dedicated PRA drop-off and pick-up areas at curbside
- PRA lounges, available at landside before security, airside after security, and at arrivals;
- lounges offer check-in kiosks (landside)
- Assisted changing rooms with hoists and restrooms
- Wheelchair storage
- Seating areas
- Quiet room
- Sensory room for neurodivergent travelers
- Tactile flooring for visually impaired customers
- Nursing rooms
- Pet relief areas
- Gender-neutral/family restrooms
- Dedicated security lanes

On the airport’s north side, the \$4.2 billion development of the new Terminal 6, built by JFK Millennium Partners, will seamlessly connect to JetBlue’s existing Terminal 5. With the new Terminal 6, scheduled to open in phases, beginning with the completion of the arrivals and departures hall and the first five gates in 2026, **Karen Ali**, Chief Operating Officer, JFK Millennium Partners (JMP), said, “JFK Terminal 6 will cater to the needs of a variety of different travelers. This includes business travelers, for example, who may want to zip through the terminal as quickly as possible using their smartphone, to families with small children who require extra time and a more hands-on approach. There’s also travelers with pets, senior citizens, as well as travelers with reduced mobility or disabilities — both visible and invisible.

In each of these cases, and as we continue to prepare for T6’s opening in 2026 — we remain focused on providing the right infrastructure and the best technologies to meet each of our travelers’ needs. In addition, our JMP philosophy is that our people are our greatest asset, and so our goal will be to open a state-of-the-art terminal that is guest experience and ADA-oriented in its design but staffed with the right people who will go that extra mile to make all T6 travelers feel welcome and supported.”

**Continued On Page 18**



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**Rooftop & Wooftop Lounge** – Located in Terminal 5, across from Gate 28, this outdoor space is open to all travelers and their pets. It features tables, benches, and a garden with planter boxes where potatoes, herbs, and other produce are grown, making the T5 Rooftop Lounge the first functioning farm in the world at an airport.

Also located in Terminal 5 is the JetBlue Junior Children’s Play Area, which includes an immersive cockpit simulator that allows young travelers to pilot an airplane in an aviation-themed play space. Here, they can also learn about aviation history events and landmarks from many of JetBlue’s destinations and a kid’s reading nook.

Located in Terminal 4 and Terminal 8 are **Escape Pods** that offer a quiet space for families who need to private place to retreat to, away from the activity of a busy airport. Designed to shut out the noise of the terminals, the pods include Wifi, temperature and light controls, and desks for work, food, or children’s activities. This amenity can be booked in advance at the Escape Pods website ([www.escape-pods.com](http://www.escape-pods.com)).

## LaGuardia Airport

The **Water Feature** in Terminal B, located post-security on Level 4 of the Arrivals and Departures Hall, provides a mesmerizing display. Its 4,000 gallons of recirculated water falls from more than 450 individually controlled solenoid valves, while combined with choreographed lighting, video projection, and music, creating a spectacular show for all guests traveling through the terminal.

**Play Areas** are located in Terminal B’s two concourses. They include a play structure and space where kids can run and get their energy out before a flight. They can also design their own aircraft on a table and watch it come to life on a big, interactive screen.

The **Sensory Room** at LaGuardia is located just beyond security in Terminal C. It features soft lighting, soothing music, bean bag chairs, and gently swaying egg-shaped seats hanging from the ceiling. This space gives travelers with cognitive and developmental disabilities and their families a place to relax and prepare for their trip.

Located in Terminal B, **LaGuardia’s dual pedestrian skybridges** connect



passengers to the terminals east gates and gives a bird’s-eye view of airplanes taxiing beneath, to and from their gates, as well as marvelous views of the NYC skyline.

## Newark Liberty Airport

At the **Children’s Lending Library** in Terminal A, children can leave a book and borrow a different one, providing them with something new and interesting to read during their travels. The library was created through the efforts of Sia Malhotra, a local fifth grader and avid reader who approached the Port Authority in 2021 with her idea to have a children’s library at the airport.

**Play Areas** are located throughout Newark’s four terminals. One is located near the East Pier in Terminal A and includes a track, a rope course, and junior-sized bicycles so that children can run, climb, and get some exercise before boarding their flight.

The **New Jersey Forest of Firsts**, located in Terminal A, is an art installation with a digital forest that provides an immersive experience filled with music and facts about New Jersey’s history. Here, families can learn about literature, science and technology, movies, and literature, all with roots in the Garden State.

The **Sensory Room**, located pre-security in Terminal A, provides neurodivergent travelers and their families with a tranquil moment of respite in a space filled with soft lighting, fish tanks, and water features designed to evoke a verdant forest. ■



Play area located in the Eastern Concourse of Terminal B at LaGuardia Airport.

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# Midwest Express: The Best Care in the Air

BY ROBERT G. WALDVOGEL  
robertw@metroairportnews.com

Internal need sometimes leads to external purpose. Midwest Express Airlines, a unique, post-deregulation carrier, successfully demonstrated this concept.

## From Corporate to Commercial Aviation

Tracing its roots to the 1969 establishment of K-C Aviation, a subsidiary of Kimberly-Clark's flight department, which had maintained a small fleet of aircraft and serviced those of its corporate clients, it took initial, internal form when the need to transport employees from the company's Neenah, Wisconsin, headquarters to the locations of its mills, arose. They were not always conveniently situated.

If, for example, its staff had to travel from Appleton, WI., to Atlanta, Ga., they would have had to fly Air Wisconsin to Chicago-O'Hare, transfer to an Eastern or Delta flight to Atlanta, and then complete their journey by road. Although their destination was closer to Fulton County, its general aviation airport was not commercially served. It entailed a six-hour trip, but the solution



Douglas DC-9

was K-C Aviation's 1981 creation of a company shuttle operated by a 12-passenger Hawker Siddeley HS.125 business jet that enabled them to land in Fulton County itself, as well as cities such as Chicago and Memphis.

So popular was the shuttle, that the business jet was replaced with a larger DC-9-14 two years later, in April. It solved one problem, but created another—namely, excess capacity. In order to fill the additional seats, K-C Aviation elected to open the service to the public, in effect establishing a scheduled airline.

## Midwest Express Airlines

Although employee need to fly from Appleton would have limited its attraction to scheduled passengers, it elected to establish Milwaukee's General Mitchell Field as its operational base instead, an underserved midwestern airport where Northwest Airlines had created its own small hub. However, as a less congested, hassle-free alternative to Chicago-O'Hare, it was still able to serve the southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois catchment areas. That it had just completed a major renovation was a plus.

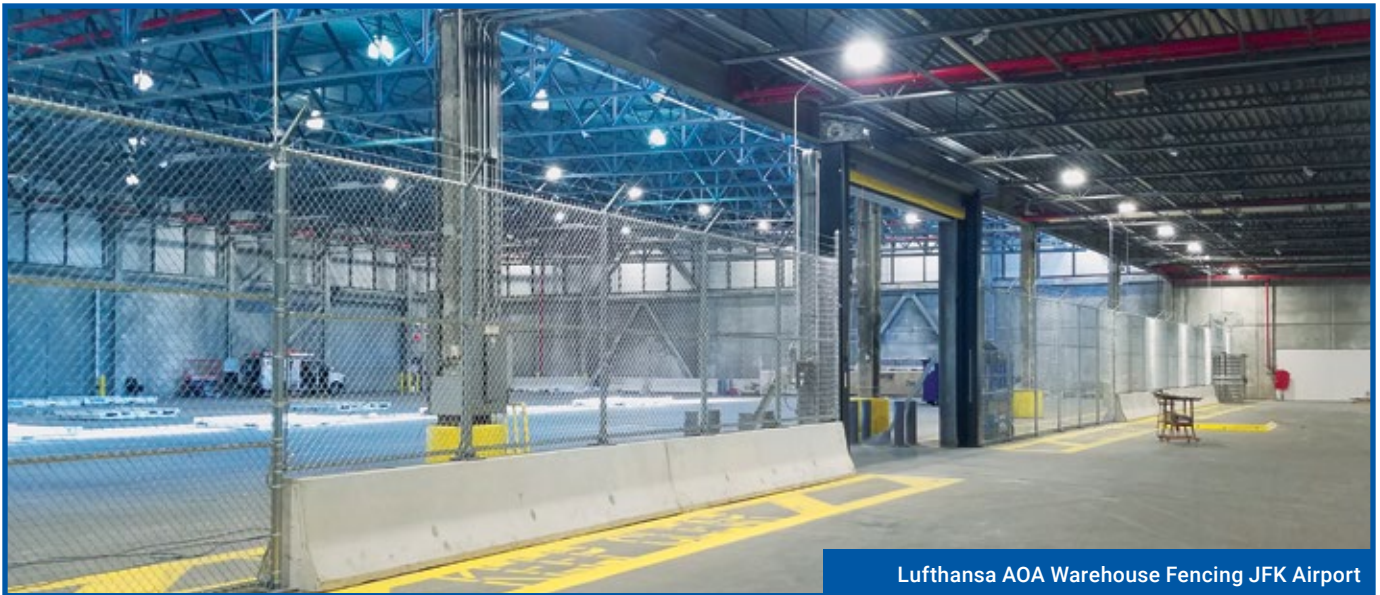
Unlike other deregulation upstarts, such as Midway Airlines and PEOPLExpress, it elected to attract higher-yield corporate clients with superior service and comfort.

"Although relatively small, Midwest (Express) Airlines was an industry leader, finding profits where other airlines struggled, and leading the nation in customer service and satisfaction," according to the "Midwest Airlines" entry in Encyclopedia.com.

Inaugurating scheduled service on June 11, 1984, with a trio of 60-seat, all-first-class-configured DC-9-14s to Boston and Dallas/Ft. Worth from Milwaukee and to Newark from Appleton, it quickly fulfilled its "best care in the air" slogan by offering

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passengers four-abreast, leather-upholstered seats; entrees such as prosciutto-wrapped pork, Beef Wellington, and lobster served on china with an assortment of fine wines; and freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

The following year, Consumer Reports rated the fledgling carrier as number one in comfort and would consistently do so in the near future.

Avoiding major airline competition, offering a simplified fare structure that equaled most carriers' regular coach fares, eliminating connecting flights, typically scheduling two daily round trips to a given destination to facilitate same-day roundtrip travel, and catering to business passengers whose usual lack of checked baggage enabled more lower-deck cargo and mail to be carried, Midwest Express embarked on a very slow, but steady expansion course. It described its attributes as follows.

"Midwest Express is dedicated to the comfort and efficiency of the business traveler. All flights to and from our Milwaukee hub are nonstop to save time and eliminate layovers or plane changes. All of our seats are extra-wide and two across for comfort. Our meals are outstanding. Our staff is genuinely friendly and courteous. And, our fares are coach—always. Fly Midwest Express. Business travel is hard enough, so we make flying easy."

By mid-1986, it operated four DC-9-14s sequentially registered N300ME through N600ME over four main routes to Atlanta, Boston, Dallas/Ft. Worth, and Washington-National from Milwaukee and two intra-state ones to Appleton and Madison. It



inaugurated service to New York-LaGuardia the following year.

During its first year of operations, it accounted for less than one percent of Milwaukee's traffic. Four years later, that number had climbed to almost 10 percent. In 1989, it became the airport's third-largest carrier.

## Expansion

Aside from its nine DC-9-14s/15s, Midwest Express also eventually acquired 16 stretched, 84-seat DC-9-30s and more than a dozen MD-81s, -82s, and -88s, enabling it to cater to both increased demand and serve longer routes, such as those to Florida and the West Coast.

While it satisfied demand, its high-quality service also satisfied desires. Echoing an obstacle-into-opportunity philosophy, Timothy Hoeksema, former K-C Aviation pilot, and long-standing Midwest Express president, once said, "When you have an industry with dissatisfied customers, you have a business opportunity."

And the carrier's structure, service, and niche had clearly seized it. But the only void it still needed to fill was the lack of feeder service on commuter routes to and from its Milwaukee hub on appropriately-sized turboprop aircraft.

Toward that end, it contracted Skyway Airlines, a division of the Mesa Air Group, to serve them with 19-passenger Beech 1900s as of 1989 under the "Midwest Express Connection" designation. It extended the major carrier's reach to destinations such as Green Bay, La Crosse, and Stevens Point in Wisconsin; Flint in Michigan, and Des Moines in Iowa.

Seeking to continue serving small, underrepresented airports yet expand beyond its single Milwaukee hub, it opened a second one in Omaha in 1995. Not entirely successful, it was replaced by one in Kansas City, once the stronghold of Eastern and Braniff.

Nevertheless, the carrier, whose new owner became Midwest Air Group after Kimberly-Clark relinquished control and two initial public offers (IPO) were made in 1995 and 1996, was successful.

It had been consistently profitable since 1988. In 1993, now the 24th largest US airline and controlling some 30 percent of the traffic in Milwaukee, it recorded \$165 million in revenue. The following year, it exceeded \$200 million. In February of 1998, its stock reached an all-time high. And by the end of the decade, it had become the nation's 17th largest carrier.

## The Last Decade

As the next decade dawned—and it would ultimately prove to be Midwest Express's last—it underwent significant changes, sometimes to navigate turbulent skies. Although it had employed a protracted expansion strategy, by the summer of 2001 it served 27 cities.

There may be strength in numbers, according to the adage, but small, in its case, offered strengths of its own, because it refrained, for the most part, from engaging in head-to-head competition with the major carriers, for which it posed little threat. Its strengths were thus its superior service, small niche, and business traveler attraction.

Yet it sought to avoid regional carrier associations by eliminating the "express" part of its name, re-designating itself, simply, Midwest Airlines. Similarly, its commuter affiliate adopted the "Midwest Connect" title.



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Revenues, it was later to conclude, could be increased if it reconfigured its aircraft in a dual-class “Signature” and “Saver” arrangement, enabling it to additionally attract the budget-conscious flier, as of 2002. While it retained the extra legroom and the chocolate chip cookie bake, it offered purchasable on-board food service in the latter class, whose seating increased to five abreast on its MD-80s.

“The moment you walk onto one of our Signature Service jets, you know Midwest is different,” it advertised. “Wide leather seats, superior service, chocolate chip cookies baked on board, and competitive fares have helped us earn our reputation as ‘the best care in the air.’ We’ve added new dimensions with our budget-conscious Saver Service, featuring low fares and extra legroom to some of your favorite vacation destinations. Add our Midwest Connect regional service, and there’s something for both business and leisure travelers alike.”

After Northwest filed for bankruptcy and scaled back its already-small Milwaukee hub in 2005, it gave Midwest new

growth opportunities there, enabling it to claim the largest airline spot.

A *Zagat* Air Travel Survey named it the Best Domestic Airline that year—the fifth consecutive time that it had done so.

The following year, it completed its fleet transition from the first-generation of DC-9s to the Boeing 717-200, which itself had begun as the McDonnell-Douglas MD-95. Its 25 aircraft initially featured an 88-seat, single-class configuration, but were later outfitted with 40 Signature- and 54 Saver-class ones.

The year 2008 proved the turning point for the once-illustrious, sterling-service carrier. Trans Pacific Capital (TPG), a private equity group, acquired Midwest for \$450 million and its remaining MD-80s were removed from service because rising fuel prices had rendered them uneconomical.

Yet a second ownership change occurred only a year later, on June 23, this time when Republic Airways Holdings acquired the airline for a fraction of the price, or \$31 million, transforming Midwest into one of its wholly owned subsidiaries. Frontier Airlines was the other one.

Reduced to a shadow of its former self, it was left with an operation undertaken by Frontier with five 136-passenger Airbus A319-100s and Republic with 15 76-seat Embraer E-170s and ten 99-seat E-190s.

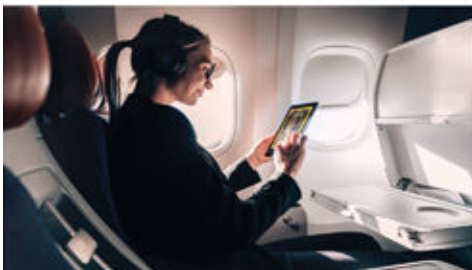
Midwest itself operated its last 717-200 with its own flight crews to Milwaukee on November 2, 2009 and by September of the following year, it was absorbed into the Frontier brand, taking its long-familiar “YX” two-letter code with it.

Its spirit of quality had alas succumbed to the ubiquitous, low-cost, post-deregulation model. ■



**ROBERT G. WALDVOGEL**

spent thirty years working at JFK International and LaGuardia airports with the likes of Capitol Air, Midway Airlines, Triangle Aviation Services, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Austrian Airlines, and Lufthansa in Ground Operations and Management. He has created and taught aviation programs on both the airline and university level and is an aviation author.



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# AIRPORT BRIEFS

## Terminal 6 at JFK Reaches a Construction Milestone with Topping-Out Ceremony



Gov. **Kathy Hochul**, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and JFK Millennium Partners, the consortium building a new Terminal 6, celebrated a key milestone in the transformation of John F. Kennedy International Airport, where members of organized labor hoisted into position the final piece of structural steel for the first phase of the 1.2 million-square-foot terminal. The state-of-the-art terminal will feature expansive, naturally lit public spaces, cutting-edge technology, inspiring public art and an array of amenities designed to enhance the customer experience, making it a critical piece of the Port Authority's \$19 billion transformation of JFK into a world-class global gateway.

A tradition in major infrastructure works, the topping-out ceremony commemorated the tremendous efforts of construction professionals and the men and women of organized labor to maintain safe and on-time construction. Terminal 6 is scheduled

to open in phases, beginning with the completion of the arrivals and departures hall and the first five gates in 2026. The second phase, which will include five additional gates, will open in 2028, completing the terminal. Terminal 6 construction has created 4,000 construction jobs.

"Today marks a major milestone in the transformation of JFK International that will set a new standard for travel in New York," Governor Hochul said. "This state-of-the-art development would not have been possible without our skilled union workers and partners, and I look forward to continuing our work with them to build a more efficient, interconnected New York."

The final beam is adorned with an American flag and an evergreen tree, symbolizing good luck and continued safe construction and operations. It bears the signatures of hundreds of partners, employees, and stakeholders contributing to developing the new Terminal 6.

**Steve Thody**, CEO, JFK Millennium Partners said, "We're thrilled to celebrate today's steel-topping out milestone at JFK Terminal 6, an exciting and important achievement on our journey towards opening in 2026. I'm grateful to our extraordinary JMP team and our 900-strong Terminal 6 workforce, who are committed to building a safe, state-of-the-art new home for our airline partners and their passengers — both here in New York and around the globe."

**George Casey**, Board Chair, JFK Millennium Partners, and Chair and CEO, Vantage Group, said, "Today's milestone reflects the hard work, tremendous talent, and enduring commitment of hundreds of people to create a new JFK T6, from the early days of planning and engagement, through financial close, ground-breaking, and construction, to today's steel topping-off. Few developments can match the transformation of JFK International Airport in scale, scope, and complexity. Together with our partners, we're honored to be delivering an extraordinary Terminal 6 — one that will provide significant benefits to the local community, transform the guest experience, and help bring to life Governor Hochul's vision of a whole new JFK."

**Joanna Geraghty**, CEO of JetBlue said, "On behalf of the more than 23,000 crewmembers at JetBlue, New York's Hometown Airline, we're thrilled to celebrate this important milestone for the new Terminal 6 in the same spot where JetBlue launched our first flights nearly 25 years ago. With a seamless connection between Terminal 6 and JetBlue's Terminal 5, customers in both terminals will have access to the best shopping and dining New York has to offer as they travel through JFK. Congratulations to our partners on the Terminal 6 team and to Governor Hochul on another major step in achieving her vision for a new JFK." ■

# AIRPORT BRIEFS

## Eight Dual-Port Chargers at Terminal 4 Will Power Delta Air Lines' Electric Airport GSE

The Port Authority, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) announced the installation of eight charging stations for electric ground support equipment (GSE) at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The dual-port chargers can power up to 16 Delta Air Lines' electric ground support vehicles at the same time, including baggage tugs, airplane tow tractors, and other airside equipment.

The chargers, installed by the New York Power Authority, advance the Port Authority's industry-leading commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, while facilitating the same achievement for its operational partners, including airlines. This includes a 2022 mandate that requires operators to transition to zero-emissions ground support equipment at all three major Port Authority airports, subject to the commercial availability and operational feasibility of zero-emission models and the availability of charging and refueling infrastructure.

"The Port Authority is honoring its commitment to reduce emissions in the communities we serve," said Port Authority Chairman **Kevin O'Toole**. "These ground support equipment chargers will support a cleaner, more sustainable future for all kinds of critical airside equipment and will serve as an example of our commitment to work hand-in-hand with our operational partners toward a greener future."

"We thank our partners in both the public and private sectors who agree on the urgency of the climate threat before us and the need to convert dirty polluting diesel equipment to clean electric equipment," said Port Authority Executive Director Rick Cotton. "These chargers help pave the way for more electric conversions of operational equipment and a more sustainable future for airport operations. We thank



NYPA, Delta, and JFKIAT for their partnership."

"Sustainability is one of the key pillars of our mission to responsibly steward the largest terminal at JFK Airport and prepare it for the future," said **Roel Huinink**, chief executive officer of Terminal 4 operator JFKIAT. "We are proud of the work we have done at T4 in the last several years to lead our industry in sustainable air terminal management, from our certification as the first existing airport terminal in the U.S. to earn LEED Platinum recognition, to the Green Restaurant Association awarding T4 the Greenest Airport Terminal Award, and more. We look forward to further partnering with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Delta Air Lines, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on this new initiative to further reduce our carbon footprint and drive resiliency in our operations at T4."

"Investing in technology to reduce our climate impact within our ground operation is a vital part of Delta's forward-thinking sustainability strategy," said **Amelia DeLuca**, chief sustainability officer for Delta Air Lines. "That is why Delta is committed to electrifying ground support

equipment (GSE) and working with partners to create the infrastructure necessary to accelerate the aviation industry's decarbonization journey. We commend New York state for prioritizing modern, sustainable airports and look forward to our continued partnership."

The eight MVS400 PosiCharge dual-port chargers have been installed at JFK's Terminal 4, which is operated by JFKIAT and is home to Delta Air Lines. They will be utilized by Delta Air Lines' newly converted electric ground support equipment and are compatible with other airport vehicles. The new ports will be an addition to the existing 84 charging ports across Terminal 4 for electric ground support equipment installed by JFKIAT in 2021.

Ground service equipment accounts for 8 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions at JFK, the equivalent of emissions produced from about 26,000 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles annually. The equipment electrification enabled by these chargers will prevent over 320 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions being released into the atmosphere annually, the equivalent of approximately 359,000 pounds of coal burned or 32,000 gallons of diesel consumed. ■

## One-Day Visit to Annecy, France



**BY MAUREEN KATZ**

[mkatz@metroairportnews.com](mailto:mkatz@metroairportnews.com)

During one of our prior visits to Geneva this summer, a Marriott employee told us about a small, very underrated, and “must-see” city on the border of Southeastern France called Annecy; we were not disappointed.

Annecy is a city bordering the majestic French Alps and Lake Annecy, France’s third largest lake and one of the freshest lakes in Europe due to the melting snow from the Alps. The lakeside waterfront area boasts beautiful beaches and all types of

water sports, paddle boat rentals, and lake cruises. Annecy is well known for its biking and hiking trails. Plage de Imperial is a very popular area on the lakefront. Another popular area of the city, just off of the lake, is a beautiful park called Jardins De L’Europe.

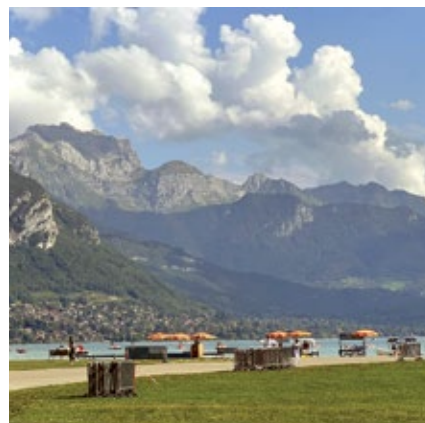
The highlight of our visit to Annecy was the Old Town area of the city on the river Thiou. This area is equal in every way to other more famous “old towns” of Europe. The old town has several canals along with a series of small quaint bridges and is nicknamed the “Venice of the Alps.” One

well-known bridge is called the Pont de Amours, which faces the lake and mountains and is very scenic. The old town has many riverside restaurants, bars, cafes, ice cream shops, and small boutiques. This area is charming, with unlimited walking. In the winter, there are several indoor swimming and wellness pools available that are attractive to many tourists.

When visiting Annecy, the closest major city is Geneva, Switzerland. Geneva is 90 minutes away by train, but you must plan a “train-to-train” connection instead of a “train-to-bus” connection.

On our next trip to Annecy, we will rent a car from the Geneva Airport and drive to the AC Hotel by Marriott Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, only 10 kilometers from the Geneva Airport. Annecy is only 33 kilometers away and a 40-minute drive from the AC Hotel. Close to AC Hotel is a well-known large water park named Vitam Aquatic and Wellness Center that is open all year. Also, very close to the hotel is the Saint Julien en Genevois Casino.

The Saleve Cable Car is also nearby, providing access to the top of the town of Saleve and overlooking the city of Geneva and Lake Geneva. Another attraction in this area is Le Grand Parc D’Andilly, known for its interesting children’s activities and array of animals. ■



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

The most comprehensive listing of New York & New Jersey airport and aviation events available anywhere online. [www.metroairportnews.com/airport-events](http://www.metroairportnews.com/airport-events)

## October 1

**Republic Airport Commission Meeting**  
Republic Airport-(FRG)  
East Farmingdale, New York 11735  
[www.republicairport.net](http://www.republicairport.net)

## October 2

**Our Lady of the Skies 2024 Luncheon**  
Honoring Brian Cooley, American Airlines and Sharon DeVivo, Vaughn College  
Crest Hollow Country Club  
8325 Jericho Turnpike  
Woodbury, NY 11797  
[www.jfkchapel.org](http://www.jfkchapel.org)

## October 5

**The Pan Am Museum Foundation 2024 Gala**  
Cradle of Aviation Museum  
Garden City, New York 11530  
[www.thepanammuseum.org](http://www.thepanammuseum.org)

## October 8

**ADDAPT Dinner Group**  
Heritage Club at Bethpage State Park  
Farmingdale, New York 11735  
[www.addaptny.org](http://www.addaptny.org)

## October 8

**PAPD Emerald Society General Meeting**  
Ridgewood Station Tavern  
Wantagh, New York 11793  
[www.papdemeraldsociety.com](http://www.papdemeraldsociety.com)

## October 9

**KAAMCO Members Meeting**  
TWA Hotel  
1 Idlewild Drve  
Jamaica, New York 11430  
[www.kaamco.org](http://www.kaamco.org)

## October 10

**PANYNJ ACDBE Certification**  
Virtual Event  
[www.panynj.gov](http://www.panynj.gov)

## October 10

**2024 Building Awards Gala**  
TWA Hotel at JFK Airport  
1 Idlewild Dr,  
Queens, NY 11430  
[www.queenschamber.org](http://www.queenschamber.org)

## October 10

**JFK Airport Rotary Club Dinner Meeting**  
Vetro Restaurant & Lounge  
Howard Beach, New York 11414  
[www.jfkrotaryclub.org](http://www.jfkrotaryclub.org)

## October 14 & 28

**Civil Air Patrol Falcon Squadron Meeting**  
John F. Kennedy International Airport  
Jamaica, New York 11430  
[falconsquadron.cap.gov](http://falconsquadron.cap.gov)

## October 19

**Girls in Aviation Day 2024**  
Aviation Career and Technical Education High School  
45-30 36th Street  
Long Island City, New York 11101  
[www.aviationhs.net](http://www.aviationhs.net)

## October 23

**New York Community Aviation Roundtable (NYCAR) Meeting**  
Virtual Event  
[aircraftnoise.panynj.gov](http://aircraftnoise.panynj.gov)

## October 24

**JFK Air Cargo Association Luncheon**  
Insights from Phil Jensen, Rinzing Wangyal, and Lionel van der Walt  
Vetro Restaurant & Lounge  
Howard Beach, New York 11414  
[www.jfkaircargo.aero](http://www.jfkaircargo.aero)

## October 24

**LGA Kiwanis Club Monthly Meeting**  
LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel  
East Elmhurst, New York 11369  
[www.lgakiwanis.org](http://www.lgakiwanis.org)

## October 25

**JFK Airport Chamber of Commerce Luncheon**  
Keynote Speaker: Jennifer Aument, CEO, The New Terminal One and Moderated by Julia-Lauria Blum  
Cradle of Aviation Museum  
Garden City, NY 11530  
[jfkairportchamberofcommerce.org](http://jfkairportchamberofcommerce.org)

## October 30

**TEB Aircraft Noise Abatement Advisory Committee Meeting**  
90 Moonachie Ave.  
Teterboro, New Jersey 07608  
[tanaac@teb.com](mailto:tanaac@teb.com)

## November 7

**LAAMCO Monthly General Meeting**  
LaGuardia Airport-(LGA)  
East Elmhurst, New York 11371  
[www.laamco.com](http://www.laamco.com)

## November 7

**21st Annual Air & Space Gala**  
Cradle of Aviation Museum  
Charles Lindbergh Blvd.  
Garden City, NY 11530  
[www.cradleofaviation.org](http://www.cradleofaviation.org)

## November 21

**Minority Business Development Institute Gala**  
Tribeca 360  
10 Desbrosses St,  
New York, NY 10013  
[www.minoritybdi.org](http://www.minoritybdi.org)

## December 2

**JFK Airport Committee (JFKAC) Quarterly Meeting**  
Virtual Event  
[aircraftnoise.panynj.gov](http://aircraftnoise.panynj.gov)

## December 6

**KAAMCO Cargo 42nd Annual Holiday Dinner Dance**  
Marriott New York JFK  
135-25 142nd Street  
Jamaica, NY 11436  
[www.kaamco.org](http://www.kaamco.org)

## December 11

**Republic Airport Commission Meeting**  
Republic Airport-(FRG)  
East Farmingdale, New York 11735  
[www.republicairport.net](http://www.republicairport.net)



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