

By Jim Martyka

Facility Upgrades

SNA Renovates Terminals A and B To Handle Expected Growth

When construction of the modernized Terminal C was completed at John Wayne (SNA) in 2011, airport officials almost immediately began laying the groundwork for a similar treatment of Terminals A and B, not only to bring them up to date but also to offer a sense of consistency in design and capability throughout the entire airport.

Six years later the \$102 million upgrade of Terminals A and B is about 75 percent complete, with an end in sight and a new look and functionality those involved are eager to share with a growing passenger base.

“Our guests have come to expect a positive travel experience in a simple, efficient, elegant facility,” says Barry Rondinella, airport director at SNA. “We think the surprise will be that we have improved upon the superior guest experience at John Wayne Airport, and we will continue to find ways to enhance our services.”

The purpose of the renovation, which airport officials say is both on budget and on schedule, is to bring the 27-year-old facilities up to date to match the recent efforts in Terminal C in terms of architecture, aesthetics, comfort, safety, technology and overall system efficiency.



While there are no new added concessions with the project, all existing ones are getting an upgrade, and airport officials are exploring options for more Orange County-themed options in the near future.

Construction on the airport, which sits adjacent to Irvine, Newport Beach and Costa Mesa and is the only commercial airport in Orange County, began in early 2016 and is expected to be completed in February 2019.

“With the completion of Terminal C in 2011, the airport wanted to take the updated design and technology and incorporate that into the existing terminals,” Rondinella says. “There was a concerted effort to ensure a consistent

Below: One of the pieces of the renovation of Terminals A and B was to upgrade the lighting and the overall aesthetics to bring them more in line with Terminal C.



Above: A new nursing mother's lounge is one completed piece of the renovation.

experience so that our guests, tenants and employees would not feel that there were 'new' versus 'old' terminals. The timing was driven by this principle, as well as the need to revitalize building systems that were approaching the end of useful life."

The Riley Terminals A and B Improvements Project, as it's officially called, is part of a larger Airport Improvement Program launched in 2005. It started with a \$233 million project that included the construction of Terminal C and its seven gates, dedicated commuter gate area, and concessions and retail. It also included the construction of a new parking structure, central utility plant and aircraft parking area.

According to the John Wayne website, the new renovation project includes:

- restroom refurbishment
- new nursing mother's lounge and animal relief area construction
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility upgrades
- interior signage and wayfinding improvements
- vaulted ceilings and new paint

- lighting renovations
- marble floor improvements
- seismic retrofit of structural and nonstructural items
- fire code and life safety upgrades
- roofing repairs
- carpet and ceiling tile replacement and
- skycap area upgrades.

Thus far, the service-animal relief area, nursing mother's lounge and the restroom reconstruction have all been completed.

The renovations to A and B are being financed by tax-exempt revenue bonds, Federal Aviation Administration grants and internal funding. Project management is provided by **Butier Engineering**, while construction is being done by **Swinerton Builders**, which also worked on John Wayne's \$48.5 million parking structure, completed in 2010.

Community officials are also excited about the project and what it will mean to Orange County as a whole.

"Just as [Orange County Visitors Association] members are committed to maintaining and improving the amenities

that drew over 48 million visitors to Orange County last year, so too is John Wayne Airport taking steps to ensure its facilities and services meet their guests' – and our visitors' – very high expectations," says Ed Fuller, president and CEO of the OCVA. "The terminal improvements currently underway will strengthen our argument that Orange County offers an unparalleled experience from the moment one arrives to the moment one departs."

Passenger, Revenue Gains

The renovation comes at a good time for the airport as it reported high growth in 2016 in multiple areas. According to an annual report, SNA saw a 5.5 percent increase in operating revenue over 2015, pushing to upward of \$129.2 million. Plus, the airport saw a record-breaking 10.5 million passengers and saw its international traveler numbers rise by 22 percent. The airport also added two new airlines: **Horizon Air** with service to Santa Rosa/Sonoma and Reno/Tahoe and **Compass Airlines** (doing business as Delta Connection) to Salt Lake

City. Existing carriers like **Alaska Airlines** and **Delta Air Lines** also have added destinations flying out of SNA.

However, early 2017 got off to a slower start, and SNA has seen traffic decrease slightly with shuffled gate assignments, some international destinations eliminated and **Southwest Airlines** getting rid of some domestic routes. Passenger counts were down 7.5 percent in February, 2.5 percent in March and 1.2 percent in April. Even counts as recent as August showed a minor 0.2 percent decrease in passenger traffic when compared to August of 2016.

Still, airport officials aren't concerned with the dip and are confident the numbers will adjust and continue to rise, especially after the renovations are completed. Rondinella says the project was designed to minimize the impact on guests, tenants and employees. Most of the work is taking place at night and in enclosed areas.

County officials say the airport sets the tone for visitors to the area, and the two work closely together. While the airport had 10.5 million passengers, Orange County had about 48.2 million visitors, about 90 percent of which were domestic passengers from California, Arizona and Nevada – all places served robustly by SNA.

"As the aviation gateway to Orange County, John Wayne Airport is an important and valued partner of the OCVA," Fuller says. "We are blessed with a wonderful year-round climate and the types of amenities visitors love: world-class attractions, shopping, restaurants, culture and beaches. [SNA] provides a beautiful, convenient and efficient way for visitors to reach all that makes Orange County a destination like no other."

Concessions Plans

After the renovations are complete, the next priority for the airport will be to look at concessions and retail. All the terminals at John Wayne offer a variety of food and retail options, though most are national chain brands like Starbucks, McDonald's, Hudson, Sunglass Hut, Ruby's, Brookstone, Subway, InMotion Entertainment, Carl's Jr. and others. The construction of Terminal C added options with a more local and diverse feel, such as a Belgian Beer Bar, OC Travel Mart and Anaheim Ducks Breakaway Bar & Grill. Expanding on that idea is the goal.

"Right now, the existing food and retail are getting a really nice facelift, taking care of the

periodic renovations that are required," says David Pfeiffer, deputy airport director of business development. "As far as new opportunities, we're just beginning the process of looking at new possibilities for others to come in. Outreach has just started, but we're looking for a big emphasis in providing options with an Orange County flavor."

The airport is also working with concessionaires on developing price-reduction strategies to stay competitive.

Other future plans include enhancing Wi-Fi in all the terminals, implementing new waste and recycling initiatives, exploring a program to support local foodbanks and soup kitchens, and the implementation of a General Aviation Improvement Program, details of which will be forthcoming. ■

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