

## Tampa International to give travelers 7,000 outlets to charge their phones

By Alli Knothe, Times Staff Writer

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Tampa International Airport will have more charging outlets than almost any airport in the nation — more than 7,000 in all — when its \$1 billion renovation is completed next year.

It's just one of the ways the people behind the renovation are trying to ensure TIA is poised for the future.

Airport officials know that modern travelers require charging stations to juice their phones or laptops while waiting for flights. So in some areas of the airport, outlets actually will outnumber seats.

"The airport was built in 1971, so it's difficult to retrofit for all this," said airport spokesman Danny Valentine, who noted Denver International Airport has about 10,000 charging outlets. "Everything is heading in the direction of mobile devices and apps so at a fundamental level you need to have power for them."

The additional challenge will be ensuring the airport is ready for technology that may not be standard today, but is around the corner and that travelers will demand within several years.

To that end, some of those technological advances at TIA will include:

- Travelers will be able to reserve and pay for parking spaces with their phones.
- The airport announced last week it would begin accepting an app that allows U.S. and Canadian travelers flying in from abroad to answer declaration questions with their phones rather than going through all the details with a border agent.
- The airport is also considering a program recently implemented in Miami in which an app gives customers GPS navigation to their gate and maps out any amenities they might need along the way — say an iced coffee, a specific brand of headphones or a place to stop for sushi.

"They're blazing the trail," said Dale Kirby, a vice president with SITA, an organization that works to advance technology in airports and airlines.

"The big trend now and what we see for the foreseeable future is automation," he said. According to SITA, 58 percent of U.S. passengers will use self-service when it is available and 95 percent of travelers carry a mobile device.

Kirby imagines that in a decade, travelers will check in their own bags, pass through a retina scan for their ticket and even board the plane without attendants. He said eventually travelers will walk into the airport and rather than searching for the Delta, Southwest or Air Canada area, they will use any kiosk to print a ticket and check in their bag.

Another new tool would connect to travelers' personal devices via Bluetooth to calculate wait times. It would alert the Transportation Security Administration officers when wait times are stretching more than 15 minutes and help them to more efficiently staff the security checks. Tampa International currently has a manual system that predicts

wait times in which agents pass out a time card to some passengers as they enter the line, and collect it when they get through.

"It is about giving passengers technology options," said Filipe Reis, the Americas regional director with the International Air Transport Association. Today, "that all converges back to the cell phone."

One of the designers behind Tampa International's renovation, HOK's Leesa Coller, said that TIA is setting an example for the industry by putting so much emphasis on ensuring current travelers can power up, but also eyeing the next moves.

"Other airports will surely add similar customer accommodations," she said.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that Tampa International Airport will have more charging outlets than any airport in the nation.

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