



Airports Become Solid Citizens

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Globalization is inextricably tied to airports. By physically connecting people to points beyond regional and national boundaries, and transporting goods throughout an interdependent world, airports have enabled the growth of the global economy. Today, as technologically-driven knowledge sharing supports innovation and drives economic productivity, airports are contributing in new ways to 21st-century commerce, both regionally and globally.

This expansive role is reinforced by the aerotropolis model, which reimagines the traditional relationship between airports and nearby cities. Airports of the past were viewed exclusively as transport facilities located on the outskirts of the cities they served. The aerotropolis makes it clear that, as drivers of economic progress, airports should no longer be isolated from nearby cities; airport seclusion is not a viable option.

Clearly, the form of today's airports serves a greater societal function. Whether large or small, airports are no longer just generators of aeronautical revenue; they are vital to the macroeconomy and affect regional GDP through air commerce and job creation. The airport is a tax generator to cities, a catalyst for road networks and surrounding land development, and a venue for business and leisure activities. Acting as business centres, airports can support the sharing and leveraging of human capital toward innovation.

The aerotropolis model envisions the airport as an air hub, a multimodal land hub and a magnet for businesses. For airports to thrive in this city-connected role, multistakeholder planning based on clear long-term objectives with built-in shorter-term flexibility is essential.

Master planning for airports that are envisioned as multifaceted and community-connected structures is a complex exercise. Diverse stakeholders are needed, and together they must plan for a future defined by rapid change. Airports must create solid partnerships with city governing bodies, airlines and local industries in order to create a master plan where benefits can be quantified and then communicated to the community. Collaboration, commitment and agile planning from these varied private and public stakeholders are all necessary ingredients for long-term success.

For airports to maximize their value in communities, transportation systems must create ease of access to and from the airports themselves. To this end, as envisioned transportation systems extend further to surrounding communities, airports can integrate their infrastructure plans with planning on the metropolitan



level. This effort requires a new way of approaching infrastructure investment, designed to benefit communities in addition to the airport itself. Inclusive planning also opens up the opportunity to understand and evaluate the most disruptive changes affecting cities and airports, such as the introduction of electric-powered vehicles and other New Mobility options.

As multimodal transport networks become critical for regional connectivity, stakeholders, each with particular interests and expertise, must be able to revisit planning timelines together to make modifications on their journey toward the envisioned airport destination.

We must recognize the progress of future airports depends on a synergistic family of stakeholders—from airport operators and airlines to transportation agencies, to urban planners and private businesses. These solid citizens will make a positive impact through their ongoing successful collaboration.

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