

SUMMER 2015

JUMP
ON IT.

COBUS AT AMERICA'S CAPITAL

The new American Airlines regional operation at Reagan National Airport (DCA) in Washington, D.C. has transformed itself several times in recent years, growing from a limited "origin and destination" (O&D) market to an important hub in the American Airlines network. The regional operation at DCA serves 31 cities, primarily in the East, but extends its reach as far west as St. Louis, Mo. In 2012, the US Airways/Delta Slot Exchange resulted in the single largest growth period to date for Piedmont Airlines, the ground handler in DCA. Following Department of Justice approval of the US Airways/American Airlines merger in 2013, yet another transformation took place, transitioning the status of the American operation at DCA to a gateway hub.

Schedule planners for the regional build schedules for DCA as they would other hubs in the American network. One key difference at DCA is that most of the operation centers on a 14 position hard-stand configuration versus a standard contact gate concourse. The Piedmont team at DCA currently handles 98 to 100 daily flights on a banked schedule, servicing multiple carriers and aircraft ranging from the DH8, RJ200, CRJ700 and the EMB145 and -175 aircraft, all on the hard-stand area located at the north end of the airport.

Many loyal American Airlines customers are accustomed to the regional operation at DCA handled through the North Pier of the B/C Terminal at Gate 35X. Prior to 2012, Piedmont team members boarded customers onto a small fleet of 32 seat buses with conventional school bus style seating and limited carry-on baggage storage for a quick ride to the hard-stand area, where they could board their aircraft. During planning sessions in 2011 and 2012, it became apparent that the increased activity at Gate 35X would require extensive modifications to accommodate increased customer volume and flight activity. Seating capacity at Gate 35X was increased and boarding doors were added; an extended curb, a protective canopy and an improved bus-loop would follow in 2013. A new concrete surface and level boarding ramps were added to most of the hard-stand positions. Customer Service personnel were added to answer questions about the busing and departure process to ease customer anxiety that may develop during peak travel periods.

All of these changes were developed around the critical need for a new and improved bus option for moving customers between the hard-stand area and Gate 35X. The existing bus fleet was under-sized, was difficult for customers to board and was aging. After careful study of available options, planners



focused closely on the Cobus 3000 that had been in service at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) with Piedmont for several years. Although space constraints would not allow for the 3000 to maneuver at DCA, discussions with Cobus representatives produced another option: the Cobus 2700S, a scaled down version of the Cobus 3000. The Cobus 2700S offered several attractive features needed for the four to six minute ride from 35X to the north ramp hard-stand at DCA.

To assist customers curbside, each Cobus is equipped with three electronic destination signs, displaying both the flight number and the destination city, which confirms for the customer that he or she is on the right bus. Along with an attractive and modern appeal, the Cobus 2700S features two sets of entry doors on each side of the vehicle. The extra doors allow Piedmont team members the flexibility necessary to stage buses in the most efficient configuration for a quick departure to the ramp, while exiting customers on the opposite side after they have arrived at their aircraft. There is a quick and safe one-step exit onto the curb at the terminal. Piedmont purchased an upgraded heating and cooling system to keep passengers comfortable on the hot summer days and cold winter nights of Washington, D.C. After 18 months in service at DCA, the Cobus 2700S has established a distinguished record of safety and reliability.

The American Airlines regional operation at Washington is complex and challenging. Piedmont has worked extensively with airport officials and equipment manufacturers to enhance the hard-stand experience for our customers. Introduction of the Cobus has contributed to an improved customer experience at DCA and has helped to reduce customer complaints. A more spacious cabin, improved customer access and better communication equipment onboard the Cobus helps us to prevent customer injuries and confusion. Today, regional customers of American Airlines enjoy the convenience and safety of a full service hub with amenities comparable to competitors in Washington, D.C. and beyond.

Bob Berg, Director, Piedmont Ground Handling

AIRPORT EMPLOYEES – Free To Roam Through Sterile Airport Areas Without Security Checks?

TSA to step up airport employee screening.

Department of Homeland Security tightens screening requirements for airport and airline employees.

Nearly one million workers have access to airport facilities without being screened – this situation to change as quickly as possible!

AIRPORT INSECURITY – Is 100% screening one way to ensure safety at our airports?

These and similar headlines have been appearing in industry publications: newsletters, magazines, internet articles, national and regional newspapers and more. Senators and Congressmen have added their strident voices demanding that *SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THIS LAPSE IN AIRPORT SECURITY!*

All concerned agree that in reviewing the several recent highly publicized incidents of crimes committed on airport properties involving airport employees, that there appears to be an obvious lapse in ensuring that everybody, whether employee, passenger or flight crew member, should be required to undergo thorough and complete screening. Furthermore there seems to be a general consensus that this screening should be not only on a daily basis, but every time that an individual passes from a non-sterile to a sterile side of the airport environment, that they be screened yet again. There is also some discussion that screening be implemented on a random basis – that is screening be required at non-scheduled intervals during the course of the workday as well as at locations where screening is not normally performed. This would be to ensure that a ramp worker, for example, cannot be assured that just because he passed successfully through screening procedures at the beginning of his shift that he/she can engage in illegal activities afterwards since they were already screened for the day! In order to make certain that all personnel: passengers, airport and contractor employees, flight crews and anyone who has a reason to be on the air side of the airport with access to aircraft and other sensitive areas, airports will



Interior of COBUS SCAN

have to implement procedures that force the mandatory screening of all and at all times. It is probable that additional screening gates and equipment will be required as well as personnel to administer these functions.

Is there one tool that is available to implement this additional screening requirement? Probably not – it will require acquisition and deployment of more of the already known detection equipment such as Walk-Through Metal Detectors, X-Ray machines for Bag searches, Wands, and other similar equipment. Plus airports will have to limit the number of locations where passage accessibility to airside is possible – both for individuals as well as for vehicles.

But there is one tool available now to ensure that screening of *anybody* can be accomplished *anywhere, and at any*

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(Airport Employees con't)

time? Yes there is - the **COBUS SCAN Mobile Screening Unit** is based on the standard **COBUS Airport People Moving Bus** that has been supplied to many of North America's airports.

The **SCAN** can be driven to any location on an airport's real estate to conduct random and unexpected screening: whether of catering truck occupants, aircraft refuelers, baggage and cargo handlers, repaving contractor employees, maintenance workers – just anyone who is on the ramp for any reason! Equipped with similar walk-through metal detection machines, an X-Ray unit to review bags, as well as an enclosed area where body searches may

be performed – the **SCAN Mobile Screening Vehicle** is one very useful and versatile way of ensuring that all personnel are doing their assigned tasks **and nothing more!**

Just the appearance and the knowledge of the existence of a **SCAN** on an airport can be a deterrent to would-be law breakers. Although there is no single answer to the question of how to achieve total airport security, there is at least one resource that can go a long way towards achieving that goal: the **COBUS SCAN Mobile Security Vehicle**.

Ask your **COBUS** representatives for more information about this unique tool to further enhance your airport's safety and security!

LATEST NEWS FROM THE COBUS WORLD . . .

Philadelphia – The new **American Airlines** has ordered eleven (11) new **COBUS Model 2700-S** buses which will replace the **COBUS Model 3000** buses which are nearing the end of their lease term. The new buses, although slightly shorter and with a capacity of 77 passengers versus their predecessors ability to accommodate up to 95 passengers, will continue the terminal connection routes at PHL International Airport providing airside transfers between Terminals A, C and F with access to Terminals B and D as well. The larger quantity of the new buses will mean that there will not be any wait times for the next bus – thus passengers will be assured of making their connecting flights as quickly as possible.

Washington, D.C. - As the result of the highly successful implementation over a year ago of **COBUS Model 2700-S** shuttle buses carrying passengers between the terminal and the Regional Jet fleets of **American Airlines / U S Airways Express**, an additional six (6) more of these **COBUS Airport People Moving Buses** will join the existing fleet in July of this year. Equipped with automated electronic destination signage so that passengers can be assured of boarding the right bus to the correct desired flight as well as new luggage racks for their hand baggage, these buses will continue offering safe and comfortable passage between the remotely parked aircraft and the terminal.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. - A fleet of three (3) brand new **COBUS Model 3000** buses was delivered to SEATAC Airport in the beginning of 2015. This order resulted from the extraordinary increase in flight operations experienced at the airport and they will be used to provide service between aircraft remotely parked off-gates and the terminals. In this manner the airport will be able to accommodate many more flights and airline passengers than the airport has terminal gates available.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport – Also experiencing a dramatic increase in flights including the beginning of service to several international destinations, AUSTin started using two (2) brand new **COBUS Model 3000** buses for hardstand operations. Even though these buses have only been in service for a short few months, the success of their operation has already started the airport's consideration of possibly adding even more **COBUS** buses to their fleet before the end of the year.

George Bush Houston Intercontinental Airport in Houston received one (1) additional **COBUS 3000** in the latter part of 2014. This new bus added to their fleet is the result of additional international airline traffic making its way to IAH – where contact gate space is at a premium and hardstand operations are growing.

Current Airports Using **COBUS** in North America include: Boston, New York-JFK, Philadelphia, Washington D.C. National, Atlanta, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Austin-Bergstrom, Houston Bush Intercontinental, Los Angeles, Portland OR, Seattle-Tacoma, Vancouver, Edmonton, Denver and Toronto. Is your airport next?

COME VISIT

AAAE
Annual Convention
Philadelphia, PA
June 7-10, 2015

INTER AIRPORT
Munich, Germany
September 2015

ACI-NA
Annual Meeting
Long Beach, CA
October 4-7, 2015



Cobus Chatter is published infrequently for the operators, owners and friends of the COBUS fleet in North America. Please send your comments and questions to Don Frassetto, President at 203 380 9575, or Erwin Zimmermann, Vice President at 207 483 2595, or by e-mail: don@cobus.us; erwin@cobus.us; or just direct an inquiry to info@cobus.us.

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