

# Airport report

## Special Events Impact Traffic at MSY

**By Iftikhar Ahmad**  
Director of Aviation

In January, we kicked off the year with thousands of Sugar Bowl fans faithfully following their two respective college teams to the Crescent City. This was followed by our yearly Mardi Gras celebration that was extended a week to allow for the Super Bowl to take place in the Superdome. Then if that wasn't enough following the departure of the Mardi Gras revelers after Ash Wednesday, the airport was called upon to be the travel conveyance for stranded passengers from the Carnival Cruise ship - Triumph. They were bussed to us from the Mobile Cruise Ship Port after their emergency docking with a final sojourn scheduled to the Triumph homeport of Galveston, TX via a flight to Houston on 11 chartered aircraft from MSY.

Now that the Super Bowl is behind us, the Super Bowl Monday final statistics are in and they look like this. We had an all-time daily record of 40,561 passengers. There were 135 general aviation (private aircraft) departures, 86 law enforcement officers on watch, 35 taxi starters and security guards present with 9,092 taxi trips from Thursday, January 31st thru Saturday, February 1. We nearly doubled our screening capacity and the TSA passenger screening wait times fluctuated between 2 and 50 minutes depending on the concourse. As expected, Concourse D was the busiest concourse with the longest wait times but even those wait times were reasonable. To expedite the screening of passengers traveling on Southwest Airlines, Air Trans Airways and US Airways on Concourse B, we activated the decommissioned Concourse A as an additional screening station. We even utilized the Customs Clearing station on Level 1 in baggage claim for overflow from Concourse C. There were over 100 Sports Foundation volunteers who joined the New Orleans Aviation Board staff in assisting passengers on their arrival and departure.

As I previously mentioned, the Super Bowl fell in the middle of what is traditionally the two week Mardi Gras parade schedule. As a special welcome to the arriving football fans in the terminal, our Aviation Board staff conducted its own parade as the Krewe de Louis replete with floats, costumes, a brass band and plenty of throws. To say it was a big hit with our passengers would be an understatement. For entertainment purposes and that first taste of the New Orleans music scene, various local musicians were on hand in the terminal and baggage claim to play. The music ranged from brass bands to jazz soloists and pianists and it was a festive time. I am pleased to report that the months of planning for this momentous sporting event paid off with no incidents befalling the airport.

After Super Bowl, we actively prepared for the departure of the Mardi Gras fans but as it turned out, we operated much like a normal day at the airport with a few moments of increased traffic. TSA utilized the additional

screening equipment brought in for Super Bowl to keep the lines moving. And it worked. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the New Orleans Aviation Board staff, our airline partners and vendors, TSA, the Jefferson and St. Charles Parish Sheriff Departments, Jani-King and our emergency response team for the outstanding job they have done to provide assistance and care to the hundreds of thousands of passengers that have traveled through Armstrong International Airport so far this year. There were times our teams were stretched but everyone worked as one to address whatever needs there were.

We now are preparing for the next big event which should be the Women's Final Four. We look forward to another opportunity to be the front door to our city and region. It is always a pleasure to be the first greeting to our arriving passengers. We take our responsibility to set the tone for the traveler's stay in our great city seriously and we work hard to meet the challenge with excellent customer service, a smile and on "Throw Me Something Fridays" a string of beads. ✈



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