

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
NEW ORLEANS
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Airport report

A New Year for Armstrong International Airport

By Iftikhar Ahmad
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It is a new year and with it comes expectations for great things at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. In airline news, Southwest Airlines has announced yet another non-stop destination from New Orleans. After announcing last year about 1.4 million more seats in New Orleans, Southwest Airlines is adding non-stop daily service to San Diego, CA starting April 8, 2014 on their 737 aircraft. The San Diego announcement will make the eighth announcement of non-stop service from New Orleans in the last three years, which includes two international flights. With the addition of this new San Diego flight, the Airport has non-stop service to 39 destinations offered by our 11 airlines. Additionally, on January 7, the airline will begin direct service to Atlanta, Georgia. This is made possible by their acquisition of Air Tran Airways, a wholly owned subsidiary. Atlanta has served as the home base for Air Tran operations for many years.

Looking back on the most recent passenger statistics report for our Airport ending October 21, 2013, Southwest is still our major airline with 38.1% of the 2013 market share which includes Air Tran, followed by Delta Air Lines with 20.6%, United Airlines with 13.8%, American Airlines with 10.0% and the balance divided among the remaining six airlines. We have been very fortunate to have a market that has continued to see our air service roster grow. We presently hold a #37 ranking in enplanements and deplanements among the 812 airports in the U.S. As the year progresses, watch for another interesting airline development. American Airlines and US Airways last month proceeded with the close of their merger on Dec. 9. Even though they are legally now one company, they will continue to function as two separate airlines for quite some time and very few changes will happen immediately in their respective operations. Eventually, both airlines will operate as the new American Airlines. Although American and US Airways have come together as one company, the process to achieve a Single Operating Certificate is expected to take approximately 18 to 24 months. This merger is expected to make American Airlines the largest operating airline in the world.

In other news, our Airport Customer Service Program continues to reap benefits with improved customer service for our passengers. As I

reported to you last year, we initiated a third party Mystery Shopping Service on Feb. 1. With this service, stores are evaluated according to type e.g., Retail, Fast Food, Restaurant, Kiosk and Newsstands. There are common standard areas of evaluation for all the types that include facility appearance, employee appearance, service, sales skills and loss prevention. Since the institution of this new service, top performers in retail have been Inmotion Entertainment, Essence News and Dunkin Donuts and in Food & Beverage Wow Wingery Bar, Copeland's Cheesecake Scoop and French Market Bar with a number of the shops scoring over the 80 percentile. Employee winners of the Mystery Shopping Service receive incentives and certificates of Customer Service Excellence, but the real winners with this service are our passengers. We want the customer experience at the Airport to be the best it can be. This service is helping us reach our goal of providing a world class customer experience for our passengers and guests.

To further gauge our progress, we have conducted a recent Airport Customer Satisfaction Survey. On a scale of 1 to 5, the overall satisfaction with the Airport was a rating average of 4.25; BM 4.24, with 94.4% giving a rating of 3 or higher. These metrics indicate that we are on the right track to reaching our goal of providing a world class customer experience at the Airport.

As we begin 2014, I would like to thank our passengers and friends that we serve for their ongoing support of the efforts of the New Orleans Aviation Board and staff to faithfully manage our historic institution and its services. The future is bright for our Airport and as we look at what is ahead, we see blue skies. ✈



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