

# Building Connected Airports that Enhance Customer Experience, Improve Operations and Drive Revenue

Travelers' Expectations Shift, Forcing Airports to  
Reevaluate How They Collect and Share Day-of-Travel  
Information

Author:



# Executive Summary

Today's travelers expect more from their airports than ever before, and as passenger growth continues to rise – the International Air Transport Association reported a 5.3% demand growth for travel through September of 2014, airports are in a prime position to leverage advances in data and technology to enhance the customer experience and increase revenue.

Many airports are already investing significantly in the passenger experience. In fact, IT & Telecommunications (IT&T) spend grew to \$134B in 2014, according to SITA. Airports that fail to make this level of investment – and adopt new customer-facing and operational technologies in a timely manner, risk falling behind competitors and missing a significant opportunity to drive customer loyalty and streamline services.

Today's technology and data revolution are absolutely transforming what travelers expect when they travel, and what airports are capable of providing. But for airports, figuring out which technologies and services to prioritize – and where to invest – is a bit more complex.

FlightView conducted a research survey of more than 2,000 travelers across the U.S. to find out what travelers expect from airports in 2015 and how the experience could be improved. This report offers insight on:

1. [How proactive updates are changing airport engagement](#)
2. [The benefits of mobile device tracking at the airport](#)
3. [The most popular self-service technology today](#)
4. [Strategies for creating a more connected airport experience](#)

## **Survey Demographics**

**Total respondents:** 2,104

**Respondent breakdown:** 37% business travelers, 63% leisure travelers.

**Survey execution:** Launched and completed in September of 2014. The survey was distributed to users of FlightView's mobile app.

## Travelers Turning to Airports as Core Source of Mobile Travel Information

Over the past few years, travelers have looked to airlines and third-party travel providers as their primary source of mobile day-of-travel information. But now, that's all changing, as travelers realize that airports can be a valuable source of information. In fact, 93 percent of travelers said they now want airports to push alerts to them on important day-of-travel information. While travelers continue to use traditional FIDS (flight information displays) at the airport, they are also demanding airport-based push notifications to their mobile devices wherever they are located. This is a substantial shift in consumer expectations, and airports need to ensure they are positioned to respond.

What exactly do travelers want airports to alert them on? Everything and anything that helps provide a smoother day of travel. Specifically, of the travelers FlightView surveyed:

- o 84 percent expect airports to keep them updated on their flight's status
- o 79 percent want updates on security wait times
- o 48 percent would value updates on traffic delays
- o 38 percent want to be kept updated on the weather at their destination city
- o 24 percent want updates on parking capacity
- o 16 percent would value being sent information on available airport amenities, like lounges, shopping, travel services and more.

This shift in expectations is forcing airports worldwide to re-evaluate their mobile communication capabilities, and put plans in place to more proactively keep travelers informed. According to a recent SITA report, over the next three years, more than 80% of airports plan a major investment or evaluation project in either the self-service and/or mobile areas. Today, 50% of airports offer flight status notifications via mobile (also according to SITA) and another 40% are expected to add the capability by 2017.

Yet for airports looking to provide a more sophisticated travel experience, the technology and mobile investment needs to go well beyond proactive alerts on flight status, security wait times and traffic delays. Travelers want to be kept informed along every step of the process, with actionable information that enables them to make quick and smart decisions when traveling.

And succeeding here offers an important bonus for airports: keeping travelers well-informed will not only improve customer satisfaction and reduce the burden on airport and airline staff, but it also leads to travelers spending more money at the airport. According to JD Power's North American Airport Satisfaction Survey, **passengers that report high levels of satisfaction at an airport tend to spend up to 45 percent more in retail shops, on average.**

## Leveraging Mobile to Collect and Share Actionable Information

Moving from basic alerts to an entirely streamlined, proactive and connected airport experience is a major undertaking for airports – and many airports have already started the journey.

One of the more sophisticated and effective – but somewhat controversial – ways airports can keep travelers informed is by tracking mobile devices carried through the airport, aggregating location and movement information and drawing insights on passenger flow. FlightView found that there's a growing interest among travelers to allow airports to anonymously track their mobile devices in order to collect and provide more actionable information, such as real-time updates on security lines, wait times at Customs and ticket counters, walking times between gates and more. More than 50 percent of travelers (53%) indicated they would allow airports to track their devices.

Some airports are already taking advantage of this through mobile device tracking, iBeacons and wearable technologies. Today, for example, Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport tracks passenger flow to improve customer service and internal operations.

The use of mobile tracking within airports is expected to grow over the next few years. In fact, according to SITA, among the top 50 airports with the highest passenger numbers, over 50% plan to run projects with iBeacons and mobile devices over the next three years, and 19% plan to evaluate the inclusion of wearable technologies. Today, 22% of airports use business intelligence as part of a passenger flow management plan to identify high traffic times, direct passenger flow and allocate resources. As the sophistication of iBeacons and other tracking technologies continue to advance, FlightView expects to see more airports leverage real-time data and business intelligence to improve operations and the overall airport experience.

What's driving this demand? It's a win-win for both the airport and the traveler. Mobile device tracking helps airports understand where travelers are in real-time so they can more effectively move around their operations staff to better serve customers. Also, with this tracking data they can provide a more personalized experience with location-based contextual information. The benefits are two-fold – customers aren't stuck in long lines and can navigate through the airport more effectively, and airport operations aren't over- or under-allocating resources and can offer better customer service.

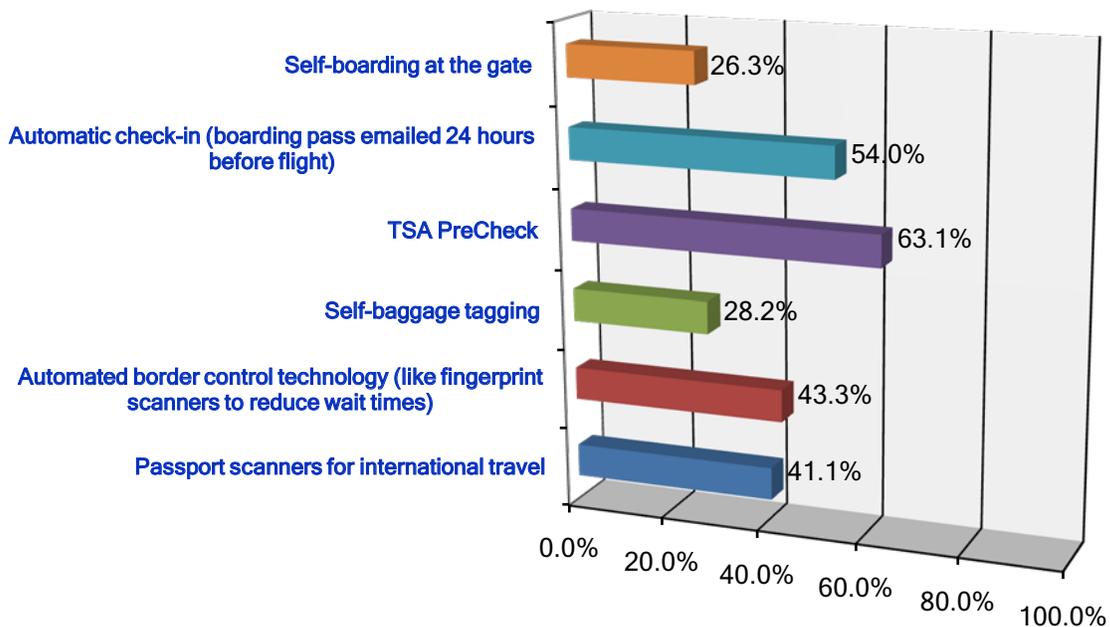
And at the end of the day, it all ties back to revenue. From its mobile tracking initiatives at North American airports, SITA reported that **an extra 10 minutes in a security line reduces an average customers' retail spend by 30 percent. Multiply that by the millions of passengers that pass through an airport each year, and the impact in lost revenue is substantial.**

## Building out the streamlined, connected airport with self-service

The evolution of self-service technology has been one of the most significant advancements in streamlining processes and airport customer service over the past five years – yet travelers indicated that they still want more.

When asked which specific self-service options they wish were made more readily available by airports and airlines, 63 percent of travelers said TSA PreCheck, 54 percent said automatic flight check-in and 43 percent said automated border-control technology. Rounding out the top five were passport scanners for international travel (41%) and self-tagging baggage stations (28%).

### Which self-service options do you wish airports and airlines offered more often?

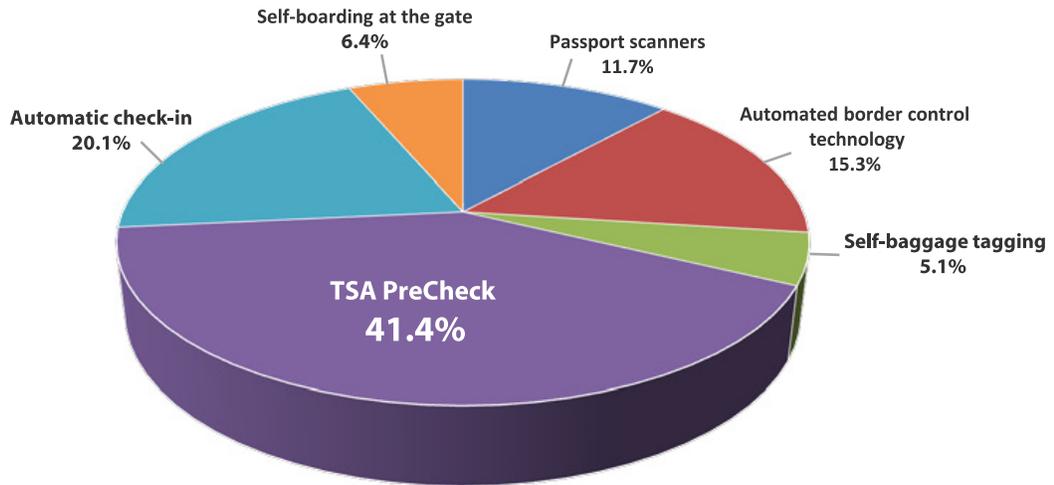


When travelers were asked which self-service technology or process provided the biggest improvement to their airport experience, TSA PreCheck won by a wide margin. According to FlightView's research, the airport industry has been effective in creating awareness for TSA PreCheck: 71 percent of travelers reported being familiar with the process, and only 33 percent said they found the process confusing.

Another self-service technology that's actively being explored by airlines is self-boarding at the gate. However, travelers are pretty united against the idea: Only 40 percent of travelers believe that self-boarding would be an improvement over current boarding processes, and only 6 percent ranked self-boarding ahead of other self-service technologies when asked which would offer the biggest improvement to their travel experience.

For airports, striking a balance between budget and new technologies and processes is important, as not every technological advance will have a direct impact on the passenger experience. To that end, airports need to continually evaluate the services they offer to ensure they map to what today's travelers need and expect.

**Of the following self-service options, which one do you think offers the biggest improvement to a travelers' experience?**



**Next Steps: Strategies for Creating a Connected Airport Experience that Enhances Customer Satisfaction, Improves Operations and Drives Revenue**

Where should airports go from here?

1. **Evaluate customer-facing investments.** Technology advancement and innovation – and the resulting evolution of travelers' expectations – is not going anywhere, and airports will be faced with regular decisions on where to invest, how to change and what to prioritize. When weighing major investment decisions, airports need to focus first and foremost on how much the investment in question will improve the day-of-travel experience and overall traveler satisfaction, which has a direct tie to terminal and gate-side airport revenue.
2. **Prepare for the communication shift.** Travelers now have higher expectations of their airports, and expect proactive day-of-travel mobile alerts on security wait times, parking lot capacity and flight status. This represents a substantial shift for airports, who have historically been relied on to provide information for travelers and visitors on digital display in the airport. Travelers now want to get information directly from airports on mobile – anytime, and anyplace -- and airports need to ensure they are positioned to respond.

3. **Invest in actionable, real-time information.** While airports have invested heavily in infrastructure and technology, generally speaking, the majority of travelers still view being at the airport as a stressful experience – which of course, is not very conducive to consumer spending and satisfaction. The best and most cost-effective way to overcome this hurdle: invest in better, more actionable information. The more data a traveler has at his or her disposal, the better the airport experience. Airports need to ensure the right information is widely available throughout terminals and gate-side, and proactively sent to travelers on their mobile devices.
4. **Learn to leverage business intelligence.** Managing passenger flow, analyzing capacity, streamlining airport operations, and providing location-based contextual information are beneficial for creating a better airport experience for customers as well as directly to the bottom line. Airports have a wealth of data at their disposal – and the ability to gather even more. The top airports take what they learn and make it actionable.

Are you ready to take the next step? Connect with us today to see how FlightView can help your airport deliver a fully connected travel experience.

## Up Next

2,000 travelers share what they expect from airports, airlines and travel providers during disruptions. Download this report to learn how to build loyalty and increase customer care during disruptions.

[Building Customer Care and Increasing Loyalty During Disruptions](#)

## About FlightView:

FlightView, the top provider of day-of-travel information and services for the aviation and travel industries, is at the forefront of helping airlines and airports increase customer satisfaction, retention and revenue. FlightView's customer list has grown to include over 120 airports, several major and mid-sized airlines and other travel related companies who employ FlightView information in digital displays, Web and mobile sites, native apps, and other technologies. For more information, visit [www.FlightView.com](http://www.FlightView.com)

## Contact Us:

FlightView  
55 Chapel St., Suite 103  
Newton, MA 02458  
[www.FlightView.com](http://www.FlightView.com)

Katherine Wellman  
VP of Marketing & Product Management  
[kwellman@flightview.com](mailto:kwellman@flightview.com)  
(617) 202-0480