

ACCESS PDX: COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARY

May 2019

To inform design work and customer relations programs related to future Portland International Airport (PDX) renovation, the Port invited accessibility subject matter experts to comment on best practices in design and barriers to accessibility at PDX. The Port also solicited input from Port staff and various airport employee tenants and partners in specific areas. A full list of PDX employee meetings and participants can be found in the Appendix.

Background: Port project teams are increasingly cognizant of the importance of targeted universal design. This is “the design of environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.” The Port’s consultant architectural teams for the suite of airport projects known as PDXNext are also incorporating universal design into their projects and following accessibility requirements dictated by code. In addition, PDX Customer Relations staff have accessibility expertise and consult with community members periodically on accessibility programs and inclusivity. This outreach effort is a conversation with the differently-abled users of PDX, to directly understand their needs, and is complementary to the work of the consultant design teams while also focusing on customer service-related topics.

Outreach method: In August 2018, the Port hosted four, three-hour assessment meetings with key stakeholders in the accessibility community to obtain input on accessibility needs relating to the large-scale built environment of PDX, and customer relations programs. The small meetings included a tour of representative elements of PDX, a basic presentation on PDXNext which focused on TCORE, and discussion of a questionnaire that attendees had completed before the meeting. Staff and attendees discussed the need for balancing many perspectives, competing interests, and the fiscal constraints of PDXNext projects.

Accessibility for these projects includes perspectives such as: visual impairment, mobility, hearing impairment, cognitive/special needs issues, age-related impairment, and gender fluidity. The Port requested that organizations send a racially diverse attendee if possible to broaden the discussion.

An additional facilitated combined workshop was held on November 7, 2018 to gather input on questions related to the finer elements of design (e.g. seating placements, walking distances, finishes) and ongoing customer relations programs. Finally, eleven presentations were provided to Port staff who work at PDX as well as airport employees representing various tenants and services at PDX, soliciting comments and input. Those discussions were valuable, as these employees interact with travelers on a daily basis. Additional individual stakeholder meetings were also conducted.

Desired Equity/Community Outcomes:

- Increased integration of equitable access and targeted universal design into the design and architecture of PDXNext projects where possible
- Enhancement of equity and inclusivity in existing and future customer service programs
- Creation and enhancement of community relationships
- Development of concepts for new guidelines on inclusive design for future Port projects

Community interests represented in assessment meetings:

- State of Oregon Commission for the Blind
- State of Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- Hearing Loss Association of Oregon
- Basic Rights Oregon
- City of Portland, Office of Equity and Human Rights Disability Commission
- Disability Rights Oregon
- Autism Society of Oregon
- Portland State University Institute on Aging
- Elders in Action
- AARP Oregon
- PDX Community Advisory Committee
- U.S. Transportation Security Administration representative

Comments Summary

Choice and Independence

Community stakeholder discussion touched often on ideas of **Choice** and **Independence**. Travelers desire options and choice in support strategies as they access PDX. Differently-abled travelers also want independence, and amenities that supply independence, as they travel through PDX.

Areas of Challenge

- Announcements difficult to understand
- TSA security screening process
- Obtaining a wheelchair at certain times
- For low-vision: need for more tactile navigation
- For deaf and hard of hearing: need for American Sign Language interpretation, technology
- Need for more seating and different types of seating
- Signage/Wayfinding
- Gendered bathrooms for gender-diverse individuals

- Website: finding accessibility information easily
- Communication of changes at PDX

Suggestions for Enhancement

- **Consultation** with subject matter experts during design; testing when implementing.
- **Technology** enhancements- Provide alternative methods for communication and messaging. (Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) at airline counter, visual and tactile alert system, Bluetooth to smartphone and voice to text message for announcements, captioning throughout PDX, flashing beacons, PDX app.)
- **Training** – in specific areas such as deaf and deaf/blind community, gender fluid/trans community and others. For Port staff and other airport employees.
- **Website**- Centralize, enhance and promote accessible webpage content
- **Customer relations**- Improve the ability to find VIPs, have some ASL interpretation available.
- **Work with Partners** – Work with TSA, airlines, PDX retail and concessions, wheelchair providers, Travel Oregon, Travel Portland to promote and implement access-friendly improvements. Improve the ability to obtain wheelchairs.
- **Facilities** - Detailed suggestions:
 - Improve PA system and/or eliminate unrequired announcements
 - Create some all-user, multi-stall restrooms. Educate public on use.
 - Create large, enhanced family restrooms
 - Enhance restroom amenities and refine design to include topics such as elimination of gaps between stall partitions, an alternative to loud hand dryers, and a variety of stall sizes
 - Add more seating in the right areas
 - Improve signage and wayfinding
 - Central and prominent elevators and escalators in terminal; redundancy helpful
 - Reduce or eliminate thresholds
 - Consider implementing an emergency alert system for the terminal

Please see the attached Appendix with specific comments for more detail on discussion and recommendations.

Ongoing Consultation

As a result of this outreach, the Port has begun consultation in these areas:

- Website- Consultation with Jonathan Simone, City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights, on website accessibility for the blind (winter 2018)

- Restroom retrofit upgrades on Terminals C, D and E - Consultation with Nickole Cheron, City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights, on mobility accessibility (2/21/19)
- Added seat for PDX Access on the PDX Community Advisory Committee (ongoing)

Recommendations

The timeline and methods for activities will depend on project and program timing, sequencing, size and budget.

Facilities Recommendations

Improve PA system in areas being renovated.	Accountability: Planning and Development in conjunction with Customer Relations
Background: Because of the age of the existing PA system, it has varied zones of audibility and intelligibility. Through this effort we received many comments about our paging system but recognize that a PA system will be required terminal-wide for regulatory announcements and emergency use, even if discretionary announcements are eliminated.	Next Steps: It is recommended that project teams improve public address systems in areas of the terminal being renovated. A potential future separate capital project may be required to address any remaining geographical terminal areas post-PDXNext.
Create some strategically located all-user, multi-stall restrooms	Accountability: Planning and Development
Background: Public facilities are increasingly providing all-user restrooms to address concerns around gender fluidity and caregiving. By providing restrooms that anyone can use, persons on the gender spectrum and/or differently-abled communities feel safer, and mixed-gender parents with children or caregivers and their charges can use the same facility. Further, the City of Portland's Resolution 37175 took affirmative steps to provide these types of spaces throughout City public spaces. While there are varying opinions the on acceptance of these facilities, it is felt that these will become increasingly common and more widely adopted as younger generations age. The Port has committed to providing choice, so will continue to provide traditional, family, and all-user restrooms. All new facilities will need appropriate cleaning and maintenance strategies.	Next Steps: Space is being reserved for all-user, multi-stall restrooms in TCORE plan. Specific placement not yet determined. Design criteria for personal service facilities at PDX has been developed by Planning & Development. The PDX policy for personal facilities and services is to provide customers with their preferred restroom choice within easy walking distance. Clear wayfinding signage directing users to the nearest alternative facility should be placed at the entry of every facility. Design of new multi-stalled restrooms to be flexible for easy conversion between types. These design standards were informed by conversations with external stakeholders. The design calls for three multi-stall all-user restrooms and three enhanced family restrooms in TCORE, with nearby pet relief area.

	The future Rental Car Center (RCC) will provide all-user restrooms in office areas.
Create enhanced family restrooms with improved amenities	Accountability: Planning and Development
Background: During the course of our work, we received several comments regarding improvements to our family restrooms to better facilitate elder or adult caregiving needs. Recommendations included features such as privacy curtains, adult changing tables, benches for attendants, and mobility lifts. The Appendix contains the full list of suggestions.	Next Steps: Enhanced family restrooms are being planned for TCORE. The Port will evaluate their applicability to other projects as appropriate.
Enhance restroom amenities and refine design to include topics such as elimination of gaps between stall partitions, an alternative to loud hand dryers, and a variety of stall sizes	Accountability: Planning and Development, Engineering PM's
Background: Portland Autism Society and others felt loud hand dryers were disruptive and would be disturbing to autistic travelers: Basic Rights Oregon favored eliminating gaps between stall partitions and mobility stakeholders felt some restroom stall sizes should be enlarged.	Next Steps: Consultation with accessibility community expert ongoing for retrofit restrooms. Will consult with subject matter experts on future amenities.
Add more seating in the right areas; reduce thresholds	Accountability: Planning and Development
Background: Discussion in the focus group mentioned adding more seating in certain areas that become crowded during peak travel times and in the concourse connector. This is both for passenger respite while getting to gate and for time spent waiting.	Next Steps: Will consult with subject matter experts on future seating selections.

Improve signage and wayfinding	Accountability: Planning and Development
<p>Background:</p> <p>Discussion and feedback in the focus and assessment groups targeted improved signage and wayfinding as a priority, with a variety of opinions about types of improvements. There was agreement that we have a good deal of signage in PDX, but it was not always clear and effective.</p>	<p>Next Steps: Signage Masterplan is scheduled to be complete July 2019. Terminal Balancing, PACR, and CCB Extension will be the first projects to roll out the new design. New design of the overhead wayfinding elements will include internal illumination for better visibility. We will be introducing icons for non-English speaking passengers. Terminal Core signage will introduce digital messaging in the overhead signs. Future projects after Terminal Core will consider adding digital elements to the gate ID signs for boarding messages at the hold rooms.</p>
Central and prominent elevators and escalators with redundancy.	Accountability: Planning and Development
<p>Background: Feedback gathered during our work confirmed some of the existing design drawbacks in the terminal today related to vertical transportation. In many cases, our escalators and elevators are not located in prominent, intuitive locations, with varied access to the conveyances and an over-reliance on signage. Universal feedback encouraged elevators and escalators to be immediately adjacent to one another with access to the conveyances side by side. These transportation cores should be prominently visible and not rely on signage to guide users.</p>	<p>Next Steps: Continue to advocate for improved and intuitive vertical transportation core design with redundancy for service outages.</p>
Consider installing visual emergency alert system	Accountability: Planning and Development
<p>Background: Technologies exist that allow normal lighting systems within the terminal (typically using LED technology) to change to red or green delineating escape paths in the event of an emergency. This provides guidance for the Hard of Hearing community by using visual cues rather than evacuation announcements and assists all passengers by providing escape path guidance.</p>	<p>Next Steps: Port to consider this technology in future innovations working groups. Implementation, if occurred, would likely be on a long-term horizon.</p>

Consult with community subject matter experts during design; test when implementing	Accountability: Planning and Development, with Community Affairs and Customer Relations as needed
Background: Throughout our work, individuals and representatives from organizations expressed an interest in continuing to work with the Port on an as-needed basis for assistance in developing the finer elements of design.	Next Steps: Port teams will continue to consult with subject matter experts on various access topics on an as-needed basis.

Services Recommendations

Consider elimination of unrequired announcements	Lead: Customer Relations with Public Affairs
Background: As an organization, we're federally required to air an "unattended bags" message every 30 minutes. Traditionally we've played two non-mandated messages that run on alternating hours. One of these messages, which plays pre-security only, is from our TSA Federal Security Director stating TSA requirements. The second message is from our Executive Director welcoming passengers to "America's Best Airport." In February 2018, the Port decided to integrate celebrity announcements into our public address system to tap into the cultural zeitgeist occurring during the designated month.	Next Steps: Public Affairs and other departments will discuss internally. The TSA message, while not mandated, is important to the preservation of our excellent working relationship with the TSA.
Consult with community subject matter experts regarding services. Continue communication about PDXNext projects.	Lead: Customer Relations and Community Affairs
Background: Will continue to consult with subject matter experts and prioritize ongoing communication of key projects. We've committed to continuing the dialogue with stakeholders to ensure their input is documented and shared with members of the PDX Next project delivery team.	Next Steps: The Customer Relations Team will work with Terminal Operations and Community Affairs in the next fiscal year to explore the idea of a working group, composed of representatives from the differently abled/aging community, that will meet to discuss operations and possible improvements. The PDX Community

	Advisory Committee has added a PDX Access seat to the committee.
Technology enhancements - Provide alternative methods for communication and messaging. (VRI, captioning, alert system, smartphone and text, ASL interpreters)	Lead: Customer Relations
Background: The Paging and Information Center (“PIC”) is open from 6am-11:30pm every day. The information booths in baggage claim are generally staffed by ABM employees or volunteers from 9am-12am every day. When overhead announcements are made over the PA system by PIC staff, the information is displayed visually on the visual paging monitors (located in conjunction with our Flight Information Displays) for the duration of the announcement. We don’t currently have any way of communicating directly with deaf or hear-of-hearing passengers any way other than a TTY machine that is located at the north information booth.	Next Steps: We are actively investigating/pursuing software that will allow customers to communicate with PIC staff via text message. We have other technology projects in the capital pipeline, such as a Bluetooth Beacon network, that will improve the functionality of mobile smartphone applications that assist the differently abled community. We will investigate VRI for use at the information booths and with roving staff.
Website improvements	Lead: Digital Communications and Customer Relations
Background: We’ve received feedback from stakeholders, specifically from the blind/low vision community, that our public website could benefit from user-testing and subsequent improvements	Next Steps: Some consultation and improvements have occurred. The Digital Communications team will continue to work in collaboration with Customer Relations and Terminal Operations to make changes to our public website based on stakeholder feedback.
Work with partners on ongoing access improvement strategies- TSA, airlines, PDX concessions, wheelchair providers, Travel Portland/Oregon.	Lead: Customer Relations
Background: Will continue to work with partners	Next Steps: Continue the dialogue during regular meetings with stakeholders. Invite business partners to attend/present at future meetings when appropriate. Offer trainings to partner groups when available.
Improve visibility of VIPs, provide training for VIPs	Lead: Customer Relations

Background: Will explore visibility improvements and training	Next Steps: Explore existing training programs, such as the online “Disability Sensitivity” training hosted by Airports Council International. LINK Also explore training in conjunction with community organizations.
Training- Offer training to specific Port PDX departments in conjunction with community orgs. Subsequently, offer training to airport employee groups.	Lead: Customer Relations
Background: Will explore training options. This could include training about how to work with variety of different type of travelers with differently abilities and challenges.	Next Steps: Identify appropriate training and seek community organization partnership in next fiscal year.
Training- Take training offered by Customer Relations as part of departmental equity plans.	Lead: PDX Operations
Background: Will explore training options	Next Steps: Identify interest areas and work with Customer Relations.