



Aviation Technical Subcommittee Highlights of the May 23, 2023 Meeting

Meeting Participants:

- Glen Warren, MWAA
- Keith Meurlin, Washington Airports Task Force
- Rusty Harrington, Virginia Department of Aviation (VDOAV)
- Richard Roisman, Arlington County

TPB Staff:

- Tim Canan
- Kenneth Joh
- Patrick Zilliacus
- Nicole McCall
- Zhuo Yang

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND APPROVAL OF HIGHLIGHTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (MARCH 23, 2023)

Mr. Tim Canan called the meeting to order at 10:30 A.M. The meeting was conducted virtually by Microsoft Teams teleconference. The highlights of the previous meeting, held March 23, 2023, were approved by the Subcommittee, as written.

2. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Support for the Continuous Airport Systems Planning Program is continuing to be recruited. The position has been recast as a Planning Program Specialist. It is a difficult time to be hiring people and Mr. Canan asked the subcommittee to direct potential candidates to the opportunity.

The last AIP grant application was submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

3. 2023 WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE REGIONAL AIR PASSENGER SURVEY ACTIVITIES

Dr. Ken Joh provided an update on the status of the Washington-Baltimore Regional Air Passenger Survey and the initial findings from the pretest survey.

The pretest survey at Dulles International Airport was conducted on April 18, 19, 28, and 30. Over the four days of field operations, 20 domestic flights and 12 international flights were surveyed on weekdays and weekends to obtain a representative sample of flights and to test survey field operations under different scenarios. After the first two days of fielding, there was a pause to allow for adjustments to survey methods prior to the last two days of fielding. Staff observed the field operations on all four days of the pretest.

Prior to the pretest, staff worked closely and coordinated with ICF, the contractor, on the following: preparing the web-based survey instrument, finalizing the business cards with a QR code to be distributed to passengers, finalizing the online survey dashboard and the data items to be included in the data download, reviewing and finalizing the operations plan for the pretest and full-scale survey, and mandatory training and on-site airport orientation session for field staff, and finalizing the sampling plan for the pretest.

Staff also coordinated with Mr. Glen Warren with MWAA. A secure room to store survey materials and to be used by the survey supervisors was arranged, and credentials to access the Airport's Wi-Fi were obtained. In addition, to establish legitimacy for the survey, the following was arranged: a letter on MWAA letterhead with information about the survey, an airport bulletin and announcement at the Airline Management Council Meeting, and daily email announcements to gate agents throughout the pretest survey period.

The pretest was informative. For the most part, survey operations went smoothly. Most passengers were receptive to the survey and most gate agents were cooperative with the field staff. Since previous APS were paper based, the pretest was extremely useful for assessing the efficacy of the web-based survey instrument. Most passengers preferred to scan the QR code and take the survey on their personal device although some passengers (out of choice or necessity) preferred to use the tablet to take the survey.

The contractor is currently working on preparing the pretest data files and recommendations which will be shared with our staff in early July. The following observations were made by our staff on field operations.

- It may be difficult to maintain the response rates from previous APS efforts. More passengers are choosing to wait for their flight elsewhere such as different gates, restaurants, and airline lounges. Additionally, there were at least two other airport surveys being conducted concurrently with the APS and this may have led to confusion by passengers.
- Most intercepted passengers completed the survey on their own personal devices instead of a tablet. The tablets did not work as well as intended because the Wi-Fi connection was suspended after a few minutes of inactivity. Additionally, fewer passengers could be intercepted with tablets compared with encouraging passengers to take the survey on a smartphone by scanning the QR code.
- Obtaining revenue passenger counts from the gate agents was challenging for some flights. Sometimes the data collectors did not have sufficient time to wait until boarding completed and sometimes the gate agent refused to share this information.
- Counting intercepted passenger counts was challenging for some flights due to the configuration of the gates and waiting areas (for example, some waiting areas were served by multiple gates). Data collectors used tally counters which were helpful in collecting the intercepted passenger counts.
- Language barrier was an issue for several international flights, particularly flights to Latin America. Some of these flights had very few survey responses compared with the total number of revenue passengers. There may be various reasons why passengers on these flights tended to be less receptive to the survey so it is not clear whether providing a translated version of the survey instrument would help.
- Most gate agents were cooperative with the field staff and read the announcements inviting passengers on the selected flight to participate in the survey. There were a few cases when gate agents either did not read the announcement or refused to read it, despite presenting a letter from MWAA requesting cooperation.

More detailed findings will be shared with the subcommittee after the contractor submits the pretest data file and recommendations, In the fall, staff will request a secure room, email announcements, and access to Wi-Fi at all three airports for the full-scale survey.

Mr. Rich Roisman inquired if field staff were available who could intercept passengers in Spanish. Dr. Joh explained that one member of the field staff was able to interview the passengers in Spanish. There was a case where two flights to Latin America departed around the same time so only one flight could be covered. Additional bilingual staff is being examined for the full-scale survey. Ms. Nicole McCall added that for the flight with the data collector who spoke Spanish, an increased response rate was not observed in comparison with the flight with the data collector who could not speak Spanish. Dr. Joh stated that this may indicate there may be other reasons passengers on those flights may not be as responsive. Mr. Roisman noted that cultural and political considerations may be coming into play. Mr. Canan noted that this was encountered during the 2017 and 2018 Regional Travel Survey and put forward a concerted effort for targeted outreach with very little success. It is regrettable but not entirely surprising that this was observed. Mr. Keith Meurlin asked for clarification if inbound or outbound flights were surveyed. The survey intercepts passengers on outbound flights. Dr. Joh added that historically large international flights and small commuter flights were some of the hardest flights to obtain sufficient responses from. Staff deliberately selected an array of flights to assess different scenarios.

Mr. Roisman inquired if there will be changes to the main survey for strategies for resurvey and potentially concatenate like flights to obtain a more reasonable response rate for problematic flights. Dr. Joh indicated that they are currently examining the sampling plan and will review the destination, size, and scheduling of flights to identify opportunities to help the field staff interview passengers more effectively and efficiently. There is a resurveying period that will be conducted over three days following the two-week survey period. There will likely be a few flights that must be resurveyed that do not meet the threshold for completed responses.

4. GROUND ACCESS TRAVEL TIME STUDY UPDATE

On behalf of Dr. Zhuo Yang, Ms. McCall delivered an update on the Ground Access Travel Time Study.

- The development of the route network is complete. Four additional routes were added to BWI and DCA and two duplicate routes were removed at the recommendation of Mr. Patrick Zilliacus. The final 115 routes are cross-checked internally.
- The demographic analysis has been completed. It includes pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic estimates.
- Staff randomly selected five routes for each airport as demos to develop the analysis procedures. The hourly travel time data was used to generate the following metrics: travel time index (TTI), planning time index (PTI), and speed.
- Staff is completing a spreadsheet based upon a list of tabulations and figures from the 2015 report.
- Next steps will include:
 - Completing the spreadsheet with 15 demo routes.
 - Starting to develop spatial analysis procedures and visualizations of the demo routes.

- Expanding to run procedures for all routes and start to prepare slides for presentation of the findings.

Mr. Zilliacus found a few routes to DCA that were not in the previous study. Mr. Zilliacus and Dr. Yang have worked together to build the networks and believe they are in good shape. Unfortunately, there are a few locations where data is not available. For example, the I-66 managed lanes outside of I-495 are not available. The lanes were created and submitted to the data provider, but they have not been turned into a format that can be used to measure speeds. A few other places are missing things but do not detract from the overall study. Mr. Canan anticipates that staff will share draft results in September and committee members will be asked to review and provide comments before the study is finalized.

5. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

TPB Staff plans to return to the subcommittee with more detailed findings and recommendations based upon the results of the pretest.

The last AIP grant application was submitted last month. This will provide resources for data processing of the APS that will be conducted this fall.

Mr. Meurlin reported that the Washington Airports Task Force is supporting MWWA with the slot perimeter review process for 25 additional flights at National Airport

Mr. Warren indicated that it was his first time attending this meeting and he is learning his role.

Mr. Harrington shared that he attended the National Aviation Systems Planning Symposium last week. Key topics included system planning, workforce development, fueling systems. Presentations were delivered by the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) companies as well as Joby and Boom Supersonic who shared information about their business models. Virginia and the National Capital Region are dedicated to being a leader in this space. Virginia Airport Operators Council Spring workshop is scheduled for tomorrow and the Virginia Aviation Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

7. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned. The next Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for July 27, 2023. It will be held virtually.