



By Carol Ward

## Experts Hope For 'Loving and Hugging' Between Railroads, Airports

In Dan Feger's vision of a better future for his airport, planes, trains, automobiles and buses will all converge in a single location, creating a true intermodal hub for travelers. Feger, executive director of **Bob Hope** (BUR) in Burbank, Calif., says the effort is part of "being a good neighbor" in the community.

This autumn, pending final approval of the Burbank City Council, BUR will break ground on a \$120M project that includes linking an elevated transit station and a consolidated rental car facility. Those will link to a train station via a bridge, and the facilities will link to the airport terminal via a moving sidewalk.

"We're attempting, with this project and with some other initiatives, to find ways to promote the use of alternative transportation by our passengers," says Feger.

On a larger scale, similar efforts are under way at Providence's **T.F. Green** (PVD) and **Miami International** (MIA). Many other airports are either embarking

on or exploring the possibility of becoming intermodal hubs, which typically combine passenger access to myriad travel modes, including airplanes, trains, buses and private vehicles.

"I think that many cities around the United States have been looking at integrating their airports more fully into their regional transportation systems, not simply by highway or roadway access but also increasingly by public transit access, especially rail transit access," says Andrew Goetz, faculty team member of the University of Denver's Intermodal Transportation Institute. "I find that to be a very encouraging development. There are some really good synergies between rail and air, and it makes a lot of sense to be moving in that direction."

### *On The Rails*

Goetz says airports have only recently been open to the possibility of synergies

*Trains, rental cars, bus lines and commercial airlines will converge at a new \$120M transportation center slated to open at Bob Hope in 2012. Pending city council approval, construction is set to start this autumn.*

with passenger rail.

"In the past, airports have not been too willing or eager to see rail lines coming to the airport because they don't want to be the ones funding these things" he says, noting that in many cases, national, state and local governments are committed to paying for the vast majority of projects.

Gil Carmichael, founding chairman of the ITI board of directors and a former federal railroad administrator under former President George H.W. Bush, puts it more bluntly.

"There is an unwritten policy in this country that airports do not want Greyhound buses or trains bringing people into the airport for free," he claims. "Airport managers don't want to lose the rental car business and the parking garage revenue."

# Major U.S. Airports With Direct Connections To Local Rail Systems

Based on a 2005 GAO summary of data from 72 airports

- Local rail access by automated people mover
- Local rail by walking
- ▲ Local rail by shuttle

● ▲ Baltimore/Washington Int'l Thurgood Marshall	Baltimore, Md.
▲ Bob Hope	Burbank, Calif.
▲ Boston Logan International	Boston, Mass.
■ ● ▲ Chicago O'Hare International	Chicago, Ill.
● ▲ Cleveland-Hopkins International	Cleveland, Ohio
▲ Dallas Love Field	Dallas, Texas
▲ Dallas/Fort Worth International	Dallas, Texas
▲ Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
■ ● Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International	Atlanta, Ga.
■ ▲ John F. Kennedy International	New York, N.Y.
▲ LaGuardia	New York, N.Y.
● ▲ Lambert-St. Louis International	St. Louis, Mo.
▲ Los Angeles International	Los Angeles, Calif.
▲ MacArthur	Long Island, N.Y.
▲ Miami International	Miami, Fla.
● ▲ Midway	Chicago, Ill.
■ ● Minneapolis-St. Paul International	Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.
■ ▲ Newark Liberty International	Newark, N.J.
▲ Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International	San Jose, Calif.
▲ Oakland International	Oakland, Calif.
▲ Palm Beach International	West Palm Beach, Fla.
■ ● ▲ Philadelphia International	Philadelphia, Pa.
● Portland International	Portland, Ore.
■ ● Ronald Reagan Washington National	Arlington, Va.
■ ● San Francisco International	San Francisco, Calif.
▲ T.F. Green	Warwick, R.I.
▲ Washington Dulles International	Chantilly, Va.

Source: (A Hierarchical Typology of Intermodal Air-Rail Connections at Large Airports in the United States,) 2010, University of Denver and University of Northern Colorado

But Carmichael suggests that airports that have that mindset might want to re-think. Just as last century brought 40,000 miles of four-lane highways in the largest public works project ever, he predicts this century will bring 30,000 miles of rail lines connecting major cities and airports around the country.

"The Federal Railroad Administration is developing a new national rail plan, and in

that plan a lot of the substance is going to be about which airports in the United States should be designated as plane-train airports," Carmichael says, noting that 13 high-speed rail corridors have already been identified.

Currently, rail connections at airports are relatively sparse. According to a report co-authored by Goetz and titled "A Hierarchical Typology of Intermodal Air-Rail

Connections at Large Airports in the United States," only 16 airports in the U.S. have 10% or more of their passengers using public transportation. **San Francisco International** (SFO) had the highest total, at 23%, with 7% of those passengers using rail and 16% using buses or vans. The airport with the highest percentage of rail usage was **Ronald Reagan Washington National** (DCA) at 13%, with an additional 4% of passengers using other public transportation.

In fact, Goetz says there are no airports in the U.S. that have an on-site rail station that connects to the national rail system.

"The best we have is rail stations that connect to local systems, and of those there are several that are pretty good," he says. "Part of the problem is that if you don't have much of a national network, then there is really not much point to try and connect to it."

However, some airports come close. For example, **Newark Liberty International** (EWR) has a monorail system that connects the terminal to rail access to Amtrak and New Jersey transit trains. And **Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall** (BWI), offers shuttle buses to a rail station about a mile away, and there is a light rail stop directly at the airport. A few other airports have similar features.

With the prospect of an expanded national network, Carmichael and Goetz

LEFT TO RIGHT: Tom Finkbiner, senior chairman of the board of the Intermodal Transportation Institute at the University of Denver, says airport connectivity is crucial to the long-term success of inter-city and high-speed rail in the U.S.

Andrew Goetz, faculty team member of the ITI, says airspace congestion and environmental concerns are good arguments for diverting some short-haul air traffic to high-speed trains.

Gil Carmichael, founding chairman of the Intermodal Transportation Institute at the University of Denver's board of directors and a former federal railroad administrator, claims U.S. airports, with a few exceptions, have resisted moves to have train or bus links at the airport.

Kevin Dillon, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Airport Corp., which manages T.F. Green, says rail service connected to the airport will expand the airport's catchment area.



*At T.F. Green, construction was under way at press time for InterLink, a consolidated rental car facility, rail and bus link connected to the airport terminal by an elevated, enclosed skywalk.*

say it would behoove airports to work toward becoming intermodal hubs. But not only will parking and rental car revenues be affected, it's likely that an increase in rail service would prompt a corresponding decrease in short-haul air service.

"You can divert a lot of short-haul traffic away from airlines to rail," says Goetz. "It makes a lot of sense from a policy perspective, especially as airports become more congested and the airspace becomes more congested."

Tom Finkbiner, senior chairman of the board of the ITI, says airport connectivity is also crucial to the success of high-speed rail.

"There is such a high infrastructure cost for rail that you've got to develop as many avenues as you can," he says, noting that there is minimal additional cost to extend a line to an airport, and the connection would boost passenger numbers considerably.



Given the current nationwide governmental focus on developing rail, Finkbiner adds, "It would be silly today for any type of airport plan to go ahead without some intermodal aspect."

### *Airport Intermodal Developments*

Some airports in the U.S. have already come around to the intermodal way of

thinking. BUR, PVD and MIA are among the airports that have intermodal projects under way, and several other airports are exploring such options.

At MIA, a Florida Department of Transportation intermodal project is under construction. The \$1.7B project, called the Miami Intermodal Center, includes the recently completed consolidated rental car center. Next up is Miami Central

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*Miami International's consolidated rental car center opened earlier this year, part of the Miami Intermodal Center that will include a people mover and links to trains and buses.*

Station, which will include Miami-Dade County Metrorail and Metrobus service; Tri-Rail, a heavy-rail system that operates through Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties; Amtrak; and taxi and other private transportation services.

The MIA Mover, a dual track 1.25-mile-long elevated people mover system, will connect MIA passengers to the RCC and the future MIC. Scheduled for completion in September 2011, the MIA Mover will have the capacity to transport more than 3,000 passengers per hour between MIA and the MIC. The Miami-Dade Aviation Department is handling construction of the MIA Mover portion of the project, at a cost of \$260M shared by the aviation department and FDOT.

Ray Diaz, chief of commercial operations for the Miami-Dade Aviation Department, says the project will ease roadway congestion, which is crucial to



the future growth of MIA.

"We are running out of roadway capacity," Diaz says. "As we try to move forward and achieve the 50 million passenger level, we were unable to sustain

growth because of our roads. In the future, some of the traffic will be arriving at the MIC, therefore decongesting our roads."

Diaz says the opening of the RCC has already resulted in a 15% reduction in roadway traffic congestion, and MIA is predicting a 30% reduction overall once the MIA Mover is operational.

Although some experts predict that expanded rail options will decrease the number of short-haul flights at intermodal airports, Diaz says that "we haven't contemplated that as a logical conclusion." Instead, he says, "We think we're going to increase usage of the airport because of the convenience."

Kevin Dillon, president and CEO of the **Rhode Island Airport Corp.**, also anticipates an uptick in business, in this case in the form of more carriers willing to serve the airport once its intermodal center is completed.

"I think it gives us a good marketing advantage when talking with airlines about starting service," says Dillon. "This gives us the ability to potentially attract some international service to connect those passengers into the Boston metropolitan area, due to the ease with which they can access it."

Dillon notes that Europeans, for example, are very familiar with airport and rail connectivity.

The PVD project, dubbed InterLink, is a partnership between the Rhode Island

## Top 20 Airports Ranked By Passenger Use Of Public Transportation

Rank	Airport	Market Share		
		Total	Rail	Bus/Van
1.	San Francisco International	23%	7%	16%
2.	John F. Kennedy International	19%	8%	11%
3.	Boston Logan International	18%	6%	12%
4.	Ronald Reagan Washington National	17%	13%	4%
5.	Oakland International	15%	9%	6%
6.	Louis Armstrong New Orleans International	15%	0%	15%
7.	Newark Liberty International	14%	5%	9%
8.	Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International	14%	10%	4%
9.	Denver International	14%	0%	14%
10.	Los Angeles International	13%	0%	13%
11.	Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall	12%	3%	9%
12.	Chicago O'Hare International	12%	5%	7%
13.	McCarran International	12%	0%	12%
14.	Orlando International	11%	0%	11%
15.	Seattle-Tacoma International	11%	0%	11%
16.	Portland International	10%	6%	4%
17.	Midway	9%	5%	4%
18.	Phoenix Sky Harbor International	9%	0%	9%
19.	San Diego International	9%	0%	9%
20.	Indianapolis International	9%	0%	9%

Source: (A Hierarchical Typology of Intermodal Air-Rail Connections at Large Airports in the United States,) 2010, University of Denver and University of Northern Colorado

Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and RIAC. The \$267M transportation hub, about half of which is being funded by RIAC through customer facilities charges levied on rental car customers, is scheduled to open for train service in October. The consolidated rental car facility was slated to open in September.

The InterLink will serve Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority commuter trains traveling between Warwick, Providence and Boston. Adjacent to the station will be the consolidated rental car facility. The project also includes a 1,200-foot, elevated, enclosed skywalk, with moving sidewalks to help shuttle passengers to and from PVD. Additionally, there will be a bus hub for local and inter-city bus services.

At MIA, PVD and BUR, airport executives are anticipating, or at least hoping for, increased rail service in the future, including the possibility of high-speed rail.

"We've left the door open for a future Amtrak stop," says Dillon.

And Feger says BUR is positioned to have "a multitude of rail connectivity."

"We are seeking the California High Speed Rail Authority's consideration of us as a location for the station in the San Fernando Valley," Feger says.

He says the intermodal center as currently planned is not expected to increase passenger numbers; instead it will reduce congestion and increase convenience. But if high-speed rail comes to the airport, "that will change the equation. People will start using the airport or not using the airport based on the existence of high-speed rail," he says.

### *Revenue Opportunities*

Airports with intermodal hubs can expect to generate some revenues from their facilities, although airport executives are generally unclear about the extent of concessions and advertising opportunities. Most of the revenue, at least initially, will come from rents and customer facility charges from rental car companies. In many cases, those revenues will be used to pay off bonds issued to build the facility.


Diaz says advertising is being contemplated for the Miami Intermodal Center. PVD's Dillon says the airport will benefit from parking revenues generated at a lot associated with the intermodal facility. In addition, the airport plans to

have a coffee cart-type concession on the train platform and "down the road we may get a little bit more expansive in terms of offerings at that location," Dillon says.

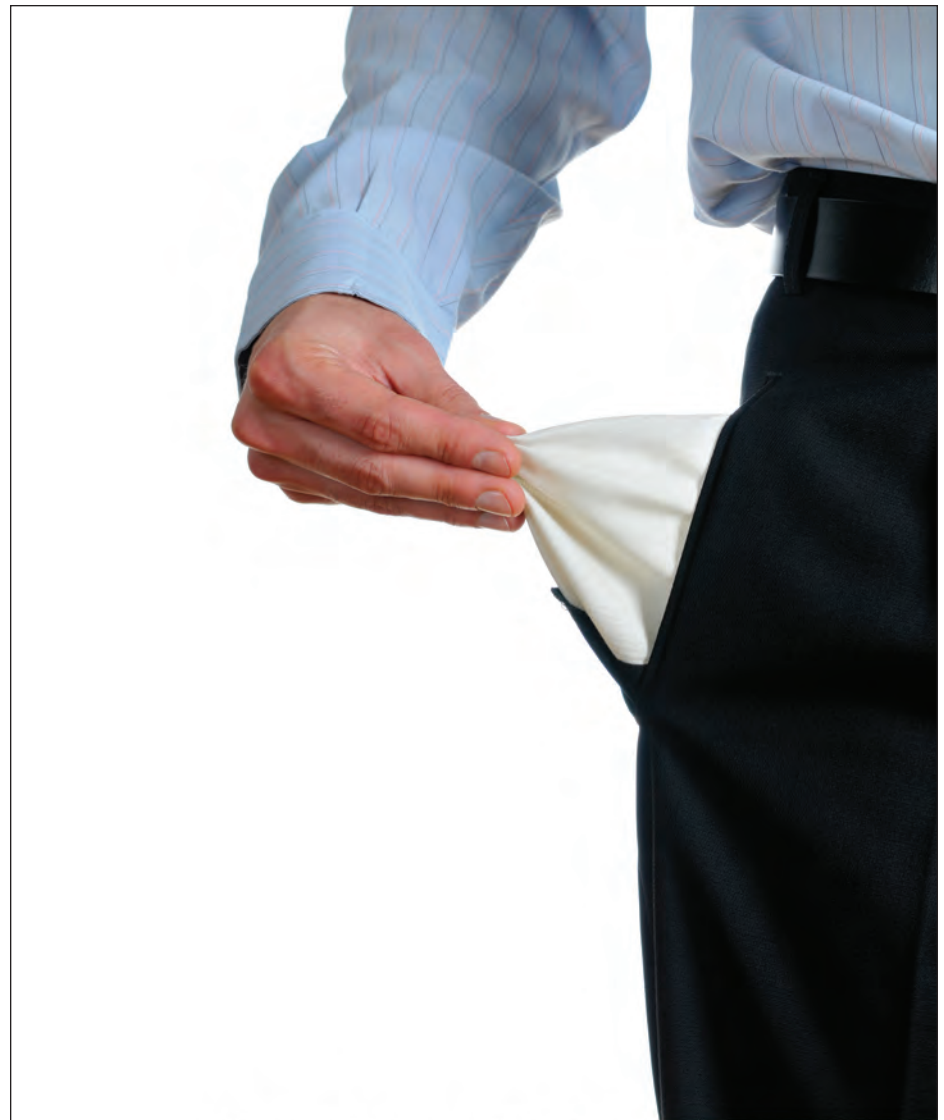
At BUR, Feger envisions small-scale concessions in the transit area of the rental car facility, as well as the elevated bus station. Advertising is also an opportunity for the moving sidewalk and the transit station, he says.

Whether the prospect of those revenues, as well as the willingness of government agencies to fund large portions of intermodal projects, will alleviate some of the skittishness of some

airport executives remains to be seen. Carmichael, for one, thinks it's about time for a change. Noting the recent partnerships between truck and rail lines where previously there was conflict, he's hoping for a similar alliance between rail and airports.

"I want to see the airports and the inter-city passenger trains loving and hugging each other," he says. 

*We'd like to hear your opinion about this article. Please direct all correspondence to Carol Ward at [carol@airportrevenue.com](mailto:carol@airportrevenue.com).*



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