Empowering Every Traveler

Accessibility Initiatives at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

2026 IHD Evidence for Success Disability Conference – June 2026

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PHX ADA TEAM

Ira McCullough – ADA/Title VI Program Manager

Jackelyn Ramirez – Small Business & Accessibility Assistant

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FOLLOW ME ON LINKEDIN

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WHERE WE ARE AT

Why accessibility matters in air travel

PHX's commitment to ADA compliance and inclusive services

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

Identify the comprehensive accessibility features available at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, including ADA-compliant facilities, wheelchair assistance, tactile wayfinding, and service animal relief areas

Explain how innovative programs, such as the Compassion Cacti lanyard, support travelers with hidden disabilities and enhance their overall travel experience.

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AGENDA

State of Accessible Air Travel

PHX at a Glance

PHX Accessibility Amenities

Role of Regulatory Agencies

Emerging Topics

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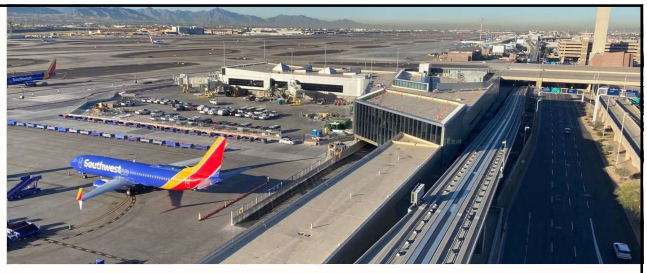

STATE OF ACCESSIBLE AIR TRAVEL

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TOP OBSTACLES AT AIRPORTS

Obstacle	%
Long distances to/from/between gates	53%
Long queues	42%
Difficulty wayfinding	25%
Lack of seating	25%
Long distances to/from rental cars, transportation, & parking	23%

Source: Open Doors Organization, 2024

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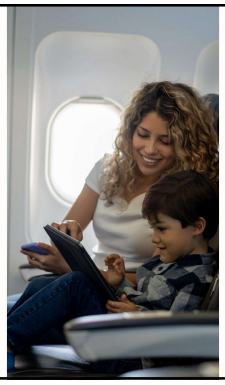

PASSENGER EXPECTATIONS (1 OF 2)

- Barrier-free access
- Friendly, knowledgeable, and efficient customer service
- Accessible programs and facilities

Source: Adapted from ACRP #157: Improving the Airport Customer Experience, 2016

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PASSENGER EXPECTATIONS (2 OF 2)

Ready access to sources of information

- Multiple accessible modalities
- Wayfinding
- Airline and passenger assistance

Source: Adapted from ACRP #157: Improving the Airport Customer Experience, 2016

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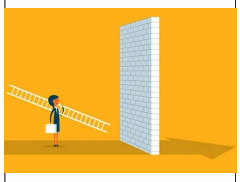

BARRIERS TO TRAVEL

- 70% forgo air travel in prior three years due to accessibility concerns
- 52% would spend more than $1000/year if airlines increased their focus on accessible infrastructure

Source: The Century Foundation, 2025

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BARRIERS TO TRAVEL (1 OF 2)

Adults with disabilities have the spending power of $511 billion

- But 65% felt their purchasing choices were limited by barriers

Source: The Century Foundation, 2025

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BARRIERS TO TRAVEL (2 OF 2)

- COVID aftermath/uncertainty
- Lack of accessible options
- Political / Regulatory impimpacts
- Handling of mobility devices and durable medical equipment
- No or inadequate staff training

Source: The Century Foundation, 2025

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PHX AT A GLANCE

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OUR GOAL: MOST ACCESSIBLE LARGE-HUB AIRPORT IN THE US

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ECONOMIC IMPACT

$44.3 Billion in annual economic impact to Arizona

$14.8 billion annual payroll

$13.3 billion in direct output of aviation services

47,000 + jobs at PHX

Source: City of Phoenix Aviation Department & ASU W.P. Carey School of Business, 2025

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ONE DAY AT PHX

1327 aircraft arrive and depart

926 tons of cargo handled

142,965 passengers arrive and depart

Source: City of Phoenix Aviation Department & ASU W.P. Carey School of Business, 2025

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ONE DAY AT PHX – ECONOMIC IMPACT

4,547 rental car contracts

$19.3 million daily visitor spending

$77.9 million in daily direct impact - making the Phoenix airport system the largest economic engine in the state

Source: City of Phoenix Aviation Department & ASU W.P. Carey School of Business, 2025

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Phoenix Deer Valley

Phoenix Goodyear

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In 2025, we celebrated 95 years

From “The Farm” to one of the busiest airports in the US

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PHX IN THE PAST – 1930S

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WHAT'S AHEAD FOR PHX

Taxiway U

Bridge north & south airfields on west end of airport

Projected to be completed mid-2027

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TAXIWAY U

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WHAT'S AHEAD FOR PHX (T3N2)

Terminal 3, North 2 Concourse

Additional gates, concessions

Projected to be completed 2027

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WHAT'S AHEAD FOR PHX

New West Terminal

Located on footpoint of old Terminals 1 and 2

Potential opening in 2033

First new terminal since 1990 (Terminal 4)

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PHX ACCESSIBILITY AMENITIES

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WHAT DOES ACCESSIBILITY LOOK LIKE?

Structural

Services

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GENERAL ASSISTANCE

PHX Navigators

Guest Services Representatives

Passenger Assistance

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PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

PHX Navigator Buddies – Therapy Dog Program

Summer Teen Volunteer Program

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COMPASSION CACTI

Compassion Cacti Program

Compassion Cacti Lanyard

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WAYFINDING

Aira

- Visual Interpreting Service

ReBokeh

- AI augmented solution

Interactive Maps

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CHECKPOINT ASSISTANCE

TSA Cares

- Travel assistance for persons with disabilities or medical conditions
- 1-855-787-2227
- tsa.gov

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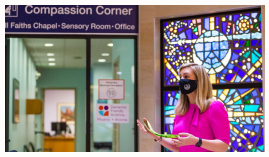
FACILITIES

Compassion Corner

Sensory Room

Accessible Family Restrooms

Service Animal Relief Areas



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COMMUNICATIONS

Passenger Paging

Information Desks

Information Kiosks / Tablets

Hearing Loops

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ROLE OF REGULATORY AGENCIES

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FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

Local Public Transit Service to/from Airport

- Ride Share
- Valley Metro Light Rail
- Valley Metro Bus Service

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US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Pre-Security and On Plane

- Airline Reservations
- Flight/Curbside Check-In
- Ground Transportation Services
- Flight Accommodations
- Wheelchair Assistance
- Onboard Plane

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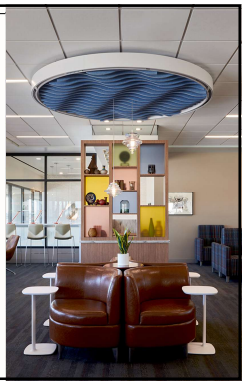
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA)

At Airport

- On-Airport Parking
- Ground Transportation Service (taxi, shuttle, bus)
- Check-In to Security
- Security to Departure Gate
- Concessions, Restaurants, & Lounges
- Gate Area / Hold Room Accommodations
- On-site Hotels
- On-site Rental Car Providers



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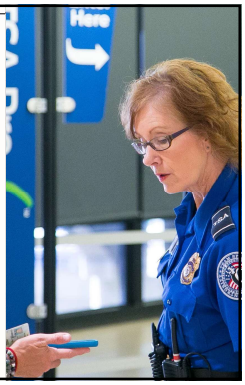
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA)

Security Screening



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CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (CBP)

Customs for International Flights

Passport Control

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CURRENT INITIATIVES

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DEMENTIA INITIATIVES

- Dementia Friendly Air Travel Workshops
- Dementia-Friendly Airport designation
- Specialized training (TSA)

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DEMENTIA WORKSHOP

- Wednesday, July 17, 2026
- 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
- Aviation Headquarters
  - 2485 East Buckeye Road
  - Free parking
- Optional PHX tour
- Register at skyharbor@phoenix.gov

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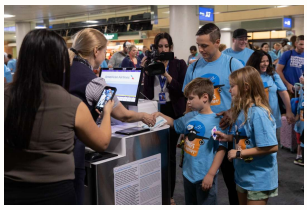
AUTISM INITIATIVES

- Ongoing citywide effort for Autism Friendly City designation
- Wings for Autism®
- Autism focused tours



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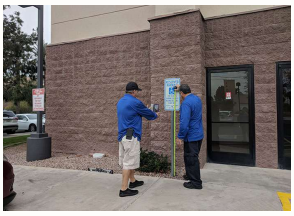
CITYWIDE ADA TRANSITION PLAN (1 OF 2)

Multi-departmental efforts to identify and prioritize barrier removal for City facilities, programs, & services



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CITYWIDE ADA TRANSITION PLAN (2 OF 2)

Public outreach and community feedback coming up

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ACCESSIBILITY IN AVIATION CHAMPION

Life Quest Training & Consulting, LLC

Aviation Business Summit Recognition Program

PHX DVT GYR

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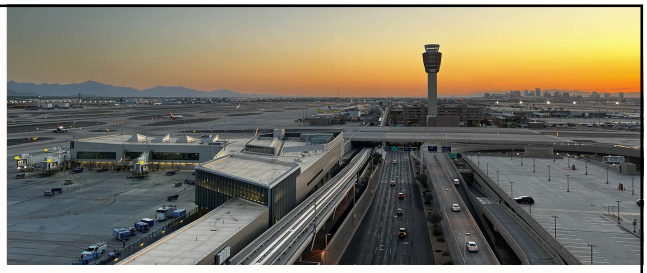

EMERGING TOPICS IN AVIATION ACCESSIBILITY

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EMERGING TOPICS - PHX

- Hardstand / Remote Operations
- New terminal design
- Adaptive Technology
  - Leveraging personal devices
- Adding low-tech solutions

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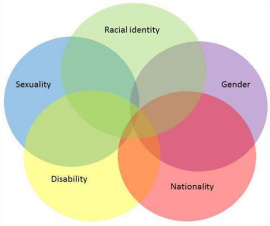
EMERGING TOPICS - AVIATION

- Intersectionality of limited English proficiency (LEP) and disability
- Navigating uncertainty in regulations & compliance



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

- Feedback on your travel experience to/from PHX
- Volunteers for emergency management exercises
- What technology worked for you at other airports?
- How can we step up our game?

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CITYWIDE ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

https://www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/communications/programs/citywide-accessibility-resources.html

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PHX ACCESSIBILITY & ASSISTANCE

https://www.skyharbor.com/accessibility-and-assistance/

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QUESTIONS

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CONTACT US

PHX Civil Rights: 602-273-2722

TTY 7-1-1 Friendly

PHXCivilRights@phoenix.gov

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