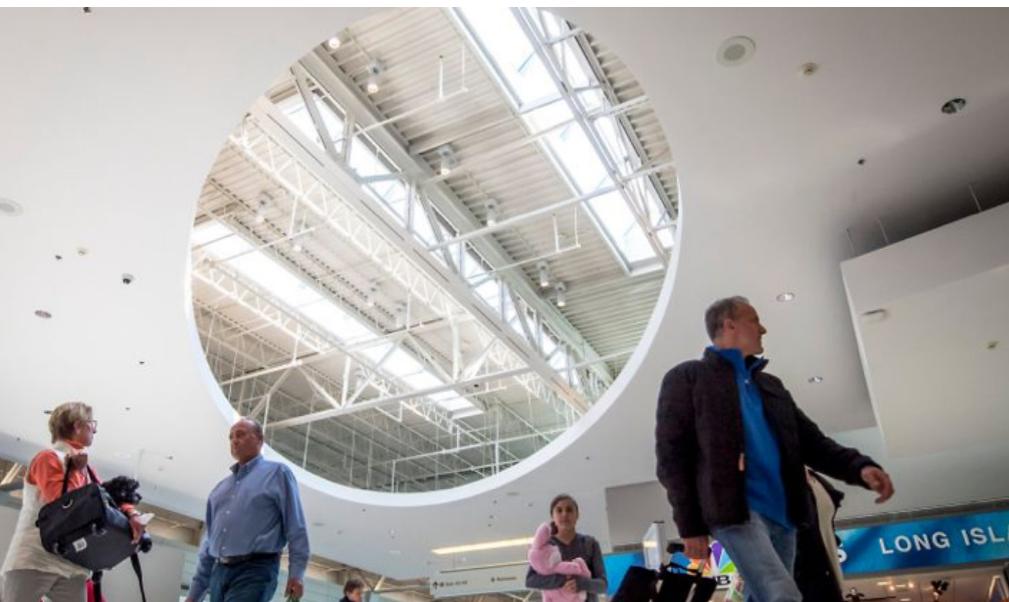


MacArthur Airport tops list of seats offered, data show

The Long Island airport saw a 27 percent increase in the number of seats offered as a result of airlines using bigger planes and scheduling more flights.



Long Island MacArthur Airport offered 470,000 more seats in 2018 compared with the year before. Photo Credit: Newsday/J. Conrad Williams Jr.

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Long Island MacArthur Airport saw the biggest increase among mid-to-large airports of seats offered on domestic flights in 2018, data shows.

Airlines based at the Ronkonkoma airport offered 2.17 million seats in 2018 compared with 1.7 million seats the previous year, a 27.6 percent increase, according to data gathered by Innovata SRS Analyser, a group that monitors the airline industry. Data did not include tickets sold.

“People are thinking about our airport — they want to use our airport more,” said airport Commissioner Shelley LaRose-Arken.

LaRose-Arken said there were several reasons for the jump in seats offered, including American upgrading its flights to Philadelphia from a 38-seat plane to a 50-seat jet; Southwest more frequently using a larger, Boeing 737-800 airplane, and Frontier expanding its year-round and seasonal flights.

MacArthur also saw an uptick in tickets sold in 2018, when 1.6 million passengers passed through the airport compared with 1.3 million passengers the previous year, LaRose-Arken said.

Airlines using MacArthur last year included American, Southwest, Elite Airways and Frontier Airlines. There are a total of 34 departures and arrivals daily out of MacArthur.

Elite stopped operating from the airport shortly before the 2018 holidays, after four months of operation.

Innovata tracked domestic “hub” airports, defined by the U.S. Department of Transportation as airports that saw at least 0.05 percent of all flight traffic to and from U.S. airports in a given year. MacArthur ranked at the top of a list of 156 airports, which also included LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy airports.

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JFK Airport ranked 95th on the list, seeing a 4 percent growth of seats offered on domestic flights to 33.7 million in 2018 from 32.4 million the previous year, and LaGuardia was at 127, with an increase of 2 percent in 2018 with 35.1 million seats offered domestically compared to 34.5 million in 2017, data shows.

Edward Shelswell-White, principal in aviation practice with ICF International Inc., a consulting firm based in Fairfax, Virginia, said the 156 airports measured make up

about one-third of all airports nationwide, but account for more than 90 percent of air traffic in the country.

Shelswell-White’s firm was paid \$509,000 by MacArthur in 2018 primarily for marketing and advertising services. ICF has a yearly subscription to data provided by Innovata, and it took the figures collected by the group and crunched them, he said.

Shelswell-White said it’s important to compare MacArthur with other similar-sized airports on the list.

“Smaller airports lost a lot of service after the 2008 recession and afterwards,” he said. “Airlines are reinvesting in smaller airports, but not uniformly.”

As an example, the airport that lost the most seats from 2017 to 2018 was in St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Shelswell-White said.

Airports listed behind MacArthur were in Aspen, Colorado, and the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport in Florida, he said.

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