

Latin American and Caribbean airports need more capacity

By **Ronnie Lovler** on November, 21 2018 | Airlines & Airports



Latin American and Caribbean airports continue to be challenged by the need to handle ever-increasing levels of air traffic, and to meet the growing demand for airport services, according to leaders of the Airports Council International (ACI).

That was the consensus at the recently concluded November meeting of ACI's Latin American-Caribbean branch in Miami, where a call was made for continued efforts to increase revenues and investments for infrastructure that will help maintain quality service for passengers.

"Aviation is a vital industry in the Latin America-Caribbean region, supporting 7.2 million jobs and providing \$156 billion in economic value," said Angela Gittens, Director General, ACI World, who addressed attendees at the conference. "Global demand for air services is growing and, the aviation industry must come together to respond to these challenges and help to ensure communities continue to reap the social and economic benefits of air service growth."

She continued, "Policy at a national and global level should be focused on facilitating sustainable growth over the long term so airports have the flexibility and consistency in regulatory frameworks to better serve their communities, invest in infrastructure and service improvement, and meet future demand. In many cases around the world, including in the Latin American-Caribbean region, private investment in airports has been successful in providing new or improved infrastructure, better facilities, and a positive influence on passenger experience."

Some efforts are ongoing, such as in Panama where a new terminal is about to open and in Chile, where a new airport is being built. However, in Mexico, continued construction of a new airport in

Mexico City were nixed by voters in a referendum held a few weeks ago. President- elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador has said he will stand by the poll results.

ACI-LAC represents 270 airports in the Latin American and Caribbean region that collectively handle 584 million passengers annually.

Outgoing ACI-LAC president Martin Eurnekian, CEO of Corporación América SA (CASA), said that airports must prepare to handle increases in passenger traffic.

"If airports, airlines, and our partners in government do not work together and prepare to meet this demand, we risk the prospect of increased congestion both in airspace and at airports. Now is the time to work together to address these challenges, to develop new strategies, and to plan to better cope with traffic growth in the short-term," he said

Incoming ACI-LAC president Andrew O-Brian, president and CEO of Quito international Airport operator, Corporación Quiport, echoed the calls for cooperation.

"The experience I have gained over my time at ACI-LAC has shown me the importance of having a very solid association of airports that can handle the challenges we face in the industry," he said in his acceptance speech.

A call was also made for more private investment in airport infrastructure, a trend that is growing. ACI figures show that globally, of the top 100 airports for passenger traffic, the number with private sector participation grew to 51 in 2017, five more than in 2016, and that in the same year, of the top 500 airports 39% had private sector participation.