

AIRPORTS

preparing for the future

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Panel:
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DayJet Corporation

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The spirit of Buck Rogers is alive and well and still pioneering the future of aviation, says SASHTO's airport panel. "Preparing for the future is our theme," said moderator William Ashbaker, "and it's challenging, given the radically new methods of air transportation."

With new technology for navigational aids in the cockpit (GPS systems) and in space (satellites), air travel in the 21st century is changing dramatically. Aircraft is changing, as well, to accommodate different travel needs and markets.

Speakers acknowledged people have transportation choices and noted FDOT Secretary Kopelousos' statement, "Today travel is a trade-off between time and money." Meeting different needs brings "opposites" into the discussion.

At one end of the spectrum, very light jets (VLJ), like DayJet's three-seater, are developing a growing group of customers. "On-demand service between regions is attracting businessmen and women opting out of six hours of travel on the highway," said DayJet Corporation director Malcolm Murphy.



Florida-based DayJet, in fact, is rapidly growing as it develops its niche connecting regions both within the state and among southeastern states. In 2007, DayJet had five aircraft and operated in five markets in Florida. Ten months later, in August 2008, DayJet has expanded to 28 aircraft serving 61 markets in seven states.

At the other end of the spectrum, new large aircraft (NLA), like the Airbus A380, will bring up to 800 passengers to destinations. Bus aviation will grow, too, at a quick pace. Airports will need to accommodate NLA and today very few can. How large aircraft will move on the airfield – taxi and park – could be demanding.

Florida, especially airports first in Tampa and Orlando then in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, expects to handle the Airbus soon. Airport planning must assume and prepare for both VLJ and NLA.

Thinking "Buck Rogers-ish" also means consideration of commercial space travel and spaceports. Launching GPS and communication satellites into space occurs today. Unmanned flights occur today (remember, the military delivers rockets and bombs this way).

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