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TBO.com Friday, June 18, 2010



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Airport terminal shines with a \$20.9M facelift

By TED JACKOVICS

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Published: June 18, 2010

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CLEARWATER - St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport celebrated the grand opening of a \$20.9 million terminal renovation Thursday intended to turn a 54-year-old building into a landmark that makes an impression on travelers.

"We turned an old building into one looking like it was built yesterday," airport director Noah Lagos said.

The improvements have been opened in stages, with a \$5 million to \$8 million phase to complete infrastructure improvements remaining.

The goal was to provide passengers with the image of a modern, upscale hotel. Details include matching wood-paneled ticket counters, custom-patterned green carpeting, beach-theme terrazzo, palm tree art wall tiles and a 45-foot by 5-foot hand-painted glass wall with a "SunSkySea" theme.

"The challenge was to unify an old building into making it look like one large terminal," said Kelly Taaffe Noto, whose Tampa firm headed the interior design plans for the facility. The terminal has had 12 additions through its 54 years.

John Wheat, interim executive director of Tampa International Airport, visited the open house with other Tampa airport officials and came away impressed.

"It keeps the same theme throughout, which is very difficult to do," Wheat said. "It's beautiful."

The major revenue sources were \$16.8 million in Federal Aviation Administration grants and \$2.7 million in airport passenger facility charges.

Reporter Ted Jackovics can be reached at (813) 259-7817.

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