

C Is Clear For Takeoff

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TAMPA - Southwest Airlines - the busiest carrier at Tampa International Airport - and low-cost counterparts Independence Air, Midwest and Spirit will fly from a new home here next week. The \$135-million glass, marble and concrete Airside C terminal that will go into service Tuesday evening will pay tribute to Tampa's successful vision of establishing a world- class airport.



Photo by: JASON BEHNKEN

Tampa International Airport is holding an open house today to show off its new terminal. Airside C will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. There will be free parking, aviation displays and activities for children.

Photo Courtesy EMS, Inc - Tampa, FL

Prototype model of Airside C Terminal built on a Z Corporation 3D Printer, an automatic modeling machine which creates models from three dimensional computer data.

The pursuit of that goal has paid off with some of the nation's lowest average air fares to 76 nonstop destinations and reaping annual awards such as the J.D. Powers surveys that customarily rank Tampa International among the top five airports worldwide.

What's more, no general tax money has funded Tampa International improvements or operations since 1973. Passenger and airline user fees and revenue have paid for Airside C, rather than local taxpayers.

The new terminal will be on display in an open house from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. today. Parking at the airport's short-term garage will be free to those attending the event, which will include aviation displays and activities for youngsters.

On hand will be representatives of the builder, The Beck Group, and Airside C architect Albert Alfonso, whose late father designed Tampa International's innovative network of trams linking the main terminal to ``airsides'' where aircraft park.

``We tried to blend aesthetics with the functional design the users want,'' Alfonso said Friday. ``But today it almost seems like being in an art museum here,'' he said, referring to small groups of media visitors quietly getting a preview.

Today's open house will be the first and last time the public can visit without holding an airline ticket. That circumstance was created by security requirements at airports nationwide since the Sept. 11 attacks.

More than 4 million passengers are expected to use Airside C annually, based on current passenger usage of the four airlines locally. The premise, however, is to attract more flights with the six gates that Airside C will add to the airport's capacity after the aging, 10-gate Airside D is closed and its tenants are relocated.

"We would like Southwest to fly from Tampa to all of their cities," said airport director Louis Miller. "We'd really like them to fly from here to Oakland, Calif., because we have no nonstop service to the San Francisco area."

Southwest will use 10 of Airside C's first 14 gates for its 62 daily Tampa departures. Two more gates will be available in June.

Southwest plans to add a flight to Chicago's Midway Airport on May 4. On Sept. 6, it will add single flights to Baltimore and Islip, N.Y..

Conversely, fledgling carrier Independence Air plans to end its daily Tampa flights to Columbia, S.C., Greensboro, N.C., and Knoxville, Tenn., by month's end and decrease its Washington Dulles International Airport departures from four to three on a seasonal basis.

The airline has restructured its routes in recent weeks in a strategy to reduce its fleet of 50-passenger regional jets while increasing its 132-passenger Airbus A319s.

Spirit Airlines also is adjusting its schedules, using new Airbus A319s on one of its two Tampa-Detroit daily flights and providing an earlier departure to Atlantic City, N.J.

This spring, Midwest will fly between Tampa and Milwaukee year-round rather than on a seasonal basis.