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CONTACT: Janet Zink
Office: (813) 554-1460
Cell: (813) 220-8279
JZink@tampaairport.com

Airport 2012 Master Plan Update offers measured approach to growth

(TAMPA) -- A consolidated rental car facility connected by a people mover to the main terminal, links to regional transportation networks, a new international terminal and a landside security screening checkpoint are some highlights of Tampa International Airport's 2012 Master Plan Update.

The Hillsborough County Aviation Authority Board is scheduled to consider the plan Thursday, April 4 at 9 a.m. in the Aviation Authority Boardroom.

The update outlines a 20-year blueprint for growth based on FAA-approved passenger projections.

The plan allows the existing terminal to accommodate up to 34.7 million passengers, a target the airport likely won't reach until 2041. It also puts off construction of a north terminal that the 2005 master plan called for when the airport hit passenger volumes of 25 million a year. The airport served nearly 17 million passengers in 2012.

"The beauty of this plan is that it takes a measured approach to capital investment so we can expand incrementally as passenger demand dictates. It also takes advantage of the airport's ground-breaking original design, that offers plug-and-play expansion by building a new airside attached to the main terminal," said Tampa International Airport CEO Joe Lopano said. "And by putting off construction of a north terminal, we're preserving valuable land for growth far into the future."

Work on the first phase of the master plan is scheduled to begin immediately and be completed by 2018. It includes expansion of the main terminal to the east and west, as well as construction of the consolidated rental car facility near the airport's entrance, connected to the main terminal by an automated people mover. The 1.3-mile line will serve not just rental car customers, but also economy parking garage customers; passengers using public transportation, commercial and personal vehicles at a new curbside at the rental car facility; and airport employees. With the support of community partners, the airport has suggested expanding the people mover south to a proposed multi-modal center in the Westshore Business District, offering a one-stop trip from I-275 to Tampa International Airport's main terminal.

Future phases of the master plan call for a new international terminal and a landside security screening checkpoint.

The airport anticipates funding the \$2.5 billion master plan projects with revenue bonds, grants and through public/private partnerships.

“With only 3,300 acres, we have to be very thoughtful about how land is used,” Lopano said. “This plan preserves land for the future, but still allows us to meet near-term needs for growing the airport’s core business – moving passengers. It also lays the groundwork for new revenue and job-creation opportunities through aviation-related and passenger-support businesses.”