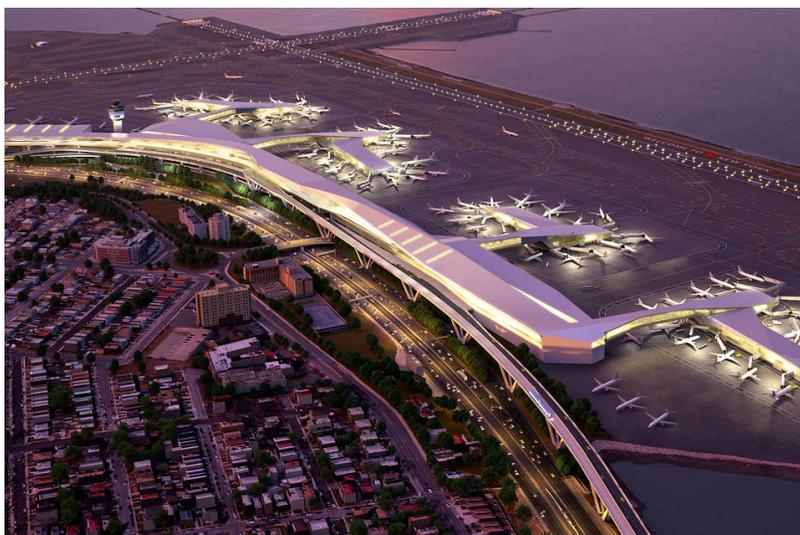


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La Guardia Overhaul Gains Ground

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's plan would revamp the airport and add a ferry and a rail link



A rendering of the new layout design for New York City's La Guardia Airport. *PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO*

By **ANDREW TANGEL**

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New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's vision for a transformed La Guardia Airport came into clearer focus on Monday as he unveiled plans for what he cast as a state-of-the-art facility to rival the best airports around the world.

Long derided as crowded, unsightly and outdated for modern air travel, La Guardia in the future would unify its disconnected terminals in a single structure featuring a grand entryway and tram for shuttling passengers inside. It would include meeting space, a potential hotel and ferry and rail links.

Mr. Cuomo was joined at a Midtown Manhattan announcement of the plans with Vice President Joe Biden, a fellow Democrat who last year ridiculed the Queens airport as something out of the "Third World."

In some ways, Mr. Cuomo’s announcement restated plans in the works for a \$4 billion overhaul of La Guardia’s Central Terminal Building, an aging 1960s-era structure known to travelers as Terminal B.

But Mr. Cuomo also said that Delta Air Lines, which has a hub at La Guardia, agreed to overhaul terminals C and D. A unified terminal building’s footprint would sit closer to Grand Central Parkway, a move aimed at improving airport operations and reducing delays.

La Guardia’s runway configuration would remain the same. But the movement of all the terminal buildings about 600 feet closer to the parkway would create additional space for aircraft taxiing, allowing for better plane movement and reduced delays.

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about its plans to overhaul terminals C and D, where the airline has spent approximately \$260 million on improvements since 2012.

Cuomo administration officials said Delta’s portion of the unified terminal would be constructed on a “parallel track” to Terminal B, whose completion is expected by 2021.

Work on Terminals C and D would be funded with private capital, most of it from Delta, according to Patrick Foye, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates major airports serving New York City.

A Delta spokeswoman said the airline was excited to be working with a panel convened by Mr. Cuomo on La Guardia’s future, but said: “This is a newly announced plan and it’s premature to comment on timing and cost.”

At Monday’s event, Mr. Cuomo characterized his plan for La Guardia in grand terms, comparable to infrastructure feats over the past century.

“This is just a metaphor for what we can do, when we work together and have the ambition and optimism and energy that made New York New York in the first place,” Mr. Cuomo said.

Mr. Biden, for his part, made light of his earlier disparagement of La Guardia. The vice president even alluded to unfunded plans to dig new rail tunnels underneath the Hudson River.

“Gov, I wish everything I said that was truthful but controversial would turn out this way,” Mr. Biden said to Mr. Cuomo. “I should have spoken to you about a tunnel before this all happened.”

Monday’s event featured star-studded videos including former President Bill Clinton and Robert Caro, the historian known in part for “The Power Broker,” his epic biography of Robert Moses, the urban planner who helped transform New York.

There was also talk of other plans for New York airports. Mr. Cuomo said the state would use tax incentives to steer cargo traffic to Stewart International Airport near Newburgh, N.Y., for example.

The event also highlighted plans to turn John F. Kennedy International Airport’s Trans World Airlines terminal into a modern hotel. The \$265 million TWA Flight Center Hotel would have about 500 rooms and is expected to open in 2018.

Mr. Cuomo launched a competition to broadly redesign New York’s airports in October, at another event with Mr. Biden.

The design competition led the Port Authority to put off taking the next major step in a project to overhaul La Guardia’s Central Terminal Building, which was built in 1964. The delay drew criticism by some business and transportation groups.

The Port Authority wound up choosing a team to overhaul Terminal B, selecting LaGuardia Gateway Partners in May. The consortium includes Vantage Airport Group, development firm Skanska USA Inc. and investment company Meridiam.

Mitchell Moss, the director of the Rudin Center for Transportation at New York University and an earlier critic of the design competition, said he was impressed with how the governor’s plans for La Guardia would provide a more efficient, coherent experience for planes and passengers.

“They’ve done far more than redesign the airport,” Mr. Moss said. “This is not just window dressing.”



A rendering of the planned interior design of La Guardia Airport. PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO

changes are afoot for La Guardia.

Plans for an “air train” rail link for the airport, which Mr. Cuomo has called for, are expected to take shape later this year as the Port Authority weighs its plan for major construction projects.

The authority has also been studying lifting La Guardia’s so-called perimeter rule, which limits flights farther than 1,500 miles.

The decades-old restriction, which excludes Denver, was aimed at steering longer-haul flights to JFK and Newark Liberty International Airport.

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