



Michael J. Landguth, A.A.E.
President & CEO

Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority 2021 Annual Report

A Year Of Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted years of record growth at RDU, but the airport rang in 2021 with a new sense of optimism as it prepared for a prolonged but steady recovery. Passenger traffic increased at a robust pace, allowing RDU to direct its efforts toward recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, welcoming back travelers, recovering nonstop destinations and building for the future.

Connecting People and Places

RDU set COVID-era records for increases in monthly passenger traffic throughout 2021. More passengers flew through RDU during Thanksgiving week than at any time since the pandemic began with more than 236,000 travelers – a 139% increase over the same week in 2020.

RDU added a new transatlantic flight in 2021 when it announced nonstop service to Reykjavik, Iceland, a tourist destination that also provides global connections to the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Continental Europe. It was the first flight added under a new program to recruit more international routes and made Icelandair RDU’s 12th airline.

After losing more than half its nonstop destinations and all international flights in 2020, RDU welcomed back nonstop routes to Cancun, Montego Bay, and Toronto after a pandemic-related pause in service. RDU also regained domestic flights, bringing the total to 36 nonstop routes within the U.S.

Sun Country Airlines launched nonstop service to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), providing leisure travelers with budget-friendly flights between the Research Triangle and the Twin Cities and bringing another commercial airline to RDU.

Planning for the Future

The Airport Authority Board approved a \$180 million budget that included the continued preservation of runway 5L/23R, the beginning of a multi-year fuel facility improvement program and the rehabilitation of other critical pavement surfaces.

The FAA authorized the Airport Authority to move forward with an environmental assessment for replacement of its primary runway, 5L/23R. While the Authority works diligently to build a replacement runway, it has also been replacing slabs of concrete on the existing runway for several years as part emergency preservation project. The FAA authorization marks the kickoff of a multi-year project that has been years in the making.

Increasing passenger traffic required the Airport Authority to reexamine Vision 2040 projects that were put on hold in 2020, including completion of a parking area for large commercial aircraft, expansion of the Terminal 2 security checkpoint and improvements to perimeter security.

Additional capital projects under consideration include parking expansion and construction of a new rental car storage lot, roadway improvements, commercial development along Aviation Parkway and future capacity-related enhancements to both terminal facilities.

Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority Board Members

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David Morgan

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Dickie Thompson

WAKE COUNTY

David Kushner, **Secretary**
Ellis Hankins

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Tammie Hall, **Treasurer**
Yesenia Polanco-Galdamez



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The Airport Authority continued to collaborate with stakeholders on RDU’s first Sustainability Management Plan, whose input helped refine the Authority’s focus areas, goals, and actions. The plan will help guide development, manage resources efficiently and improve the airport experience for travelers, tenants, employees, and neighbors while continuing to meet the needs of a growing region. It is expected to be released in 2022.

World-Class Technology

RDU became the first airport in the world to launch an online, mobile-friendly tool that compiles COVID-related travel requirements in all 50 U.S. states and our most popular international destinations. The tool gives travelers the information they need to plan their adventures and business trips and visit their destinations with confidence.

RDU will expand its touchless technology by launching a virtual food hall that will provide guests with a digital, contactless food order and payment experience. The new dining option in Terminal 2 will open next year.

RDU launched a new bus tracking system that allows airport guests to see where shuttle buses are located and get an estimated time of arrival. The TransLoc app monitors RDU’s fleet of vehicles while they are running routes between the terminals and remote parking lots.

Awards and Accolades

RDU ranked third among large North American airports for Customer Satisfaction in a new study from J.D. Power, moving up from ninth in 2020. RDU prides itself on providing guests with a world-class customer experience and is honored to be recognized as one of the best airports in North America for traveler satisfaction.

The Fitch rating service reaffirmed the Authority’s ‘AA-’ bond rating, citing the Authority’s prudent financial management during the global health crisis, strong service area and diverse airline mix.

Strengthening our Community

RDU contributes more than \$15.1 billion to the economy and supports nearly 100,000 local and regional jobs, according to an analysis released this year by the N.C. Dept. of Transportation Division of Aviation. The airport also generates more than \$3.5 billion in personal income and \$518 million in taxes for state and local governments.

RDU hosted the 2021 Plane Pull, raising more than \$110,000 in support of Special Olympics North Carolina. Teams from across the Triangle competed at pulling a 3,000-pound American Airlines plane. Team RDU was proud to welcome back the Plane Pull after a one-year hiatus and support Special Olympics athletes in our community.

RDU formed the Triangle Takeoff Coalition – an alliance of global, national and regional businesses who recognize the airport’s importance to the Triangle region. The coalition’s “Carry On” campaign featured local celebrities and ran in broadcast, social and digital media. It earned top honors from Airports Council International-North America for best Overall Public Relations Program for a medium-sized airport.

RDU was pleased to welcome families, kids of all ages and aviation enthusiasts back to Observation Park. The popular airport park provides sweeping views of the airport’s 10,000- foot runway and is located near the Air Traffic Control Tower. Visitors can spend hours plane-watching and listening to pilot-tower communications via audio speakers on the elevated observation platform deck.

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