The Role of Airports in Thriving City-Regions

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Institute of Municipal Finance and Governance, University of Toronto | 10 March 2021
**Toronto’s Pearson airport cuts workforce by 27% as traffic plunges to 1996 levels**

Greater Toronto Airports Authority said it will let go of 300 staff and eliminate 200 unfilled positions.

**Transportation / Airlines**

Jul 15, 2020 • July 15, 2020 • 1 minute read • □ Join the conversation

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**Canadian airports will lose at least $2.2 Billion in CY2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Total Enplanements**
- First Half 2020: 37 Million
- Full Year: 65 Million

**Passenger Traffic**
- March - June: 71% compared to forecasted 2020 levels
- Full Year: 42%

**Operating Revenue**
- Total Operating Revenue Losses: -$2.2B
  - a 51% reduction from cancellations in domestic and international travel.

**Operating Expenses**
- Increased Expenses from COVID-19
  - Custodial Costs
  - Upgraded Supplies
  - Extra Shifts/Staffing
  - Hand Sanitizing
  - Education and Training

For more information, visit canadasairports.ca
“Understanding the imprint of the pandemic on cities and the means through which they are being rebuilt demands we put ‘infrastructure’ at the center of our analysis.”

(Enright and Ward, 2021: 1-2)
Governance of & by infrastructure
Airports and Urban Economic Development
Toronto is air-neighbor to 50,000,000 people. It is:
- 45 min. from Buffalo.
- 2 hrs. from Detroit.
- 2.5 hrs. from Cleveland.
- 3 hrs. from Pittsburgh.
- 4-4.5 hrs. from Chicago.
- 5 hrs. from New York.

Equally close to mining and forest districts of north.
Amsterdam Schiphol Airport City
“an airport-integrated region, extending as far as sixty miles from the inner clusters of hotels, offices, distribution, and logistics facilities… the airport itself is really the nucleus of a range of ‘New Economy’ functions, bolstering a city’s competitiveness, job creation, and quality of life” (Kasarda & Lindsay, 2011; 174)
What role do airports play in ensuring thriving and prosperous city-regions?
In more than three decades of studying urban economic development, I haven’t been compelled to think much about airports — until recently.

For me, and for many other experts in my field, there were two key things that drove innovation and economic growth in cities: high-tech industries and highly educated knowledge, professional and creative talent.
Scale ‘beyond city life’
Crossing the event horizon
THE AEROTROPOLIS ATLANTA AREA AND ITS POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

- Study Boundary
- Existing MARTA Rail
- Community Improvement Districts (CID)
- Municipalities
- County Lines
- Railroads
- DSD: Report such OD

STUDY AREA SNAPSHOT

- 145 Square Miles
- 2 Counties = 10 Cities
- Major Routes: I-20, I-40, I-75
- Population: 287,600
- Employment: 175,600 (2019)
- 10 miles from Downtown Atlanta to the airport

THE AEROTROPOLIS ATLANTA CORE

- Corporate Centers
- Distribution Corridors
- Transit Corridors
- Points of Interest
- Existing MARTA Rail
- Potential MARTA Expansion
- Atlanta BeltLine
- Municipalities
- County Lines
Warehouse/Distribution Workers within a 45-Minute Drive Time of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport

135,700+
Number of warehouses distribution workers

+10.6%
Projected growth rate of warehouse jobs over the next decade

$14.39
Median hourly earnings for warehouse workers compared to $15.10 nationally

Corporate/Office Workers within a 45-Minute Drive Time of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport

215,300+
Number of corporate/office workers

+7.2%
Projected growth rate of corporate/office jobs over the next decade

$21.71
Median hourly earnings for corporate/office workers

(Atlanta Aerotropolis, 2019)
Specialization, competition, collaboration
Food for thought
Political footballs & phantom infrastructure
Political footballs & phantom infrastructure

Persistent vulnerabilities & lock-ins
Political footballs & phantom infrastructure
Persistent vulnerabilities & lock-ins
Ecological limits?