

# A SURE BET

For nearly three decades, Bechtel has managed the ongoing expansion of McCarran International Airport in the fast-growing city of Las Vegas.



A fascinating panorama greets visitors as they fly into Las Vegas. Surrounded by the parched desert of southern Nevada, the city appears as a giant oasis dotted with some of the most extravagant hotels on Earth. And if that isn't enough to convince you that your destination is the world's largest ongoing party, you'll know for sure once you're inside McCarran International Airport. It has nearly 1,200 slot machines.

Since Howard Hughes showed in the late 1960s that resort-casinos could be world-class attractions, Las Vegas has enjoyed explosive population growth while becoming, in its own words, "The Entertainment Capital of the World." Each year, almost 40 million people visit the

city, and close to half of them fly into McCarran International Airport, located less than three miles (4.8 kilometers) from the famous Las Vegas Strip.

Today, McCarran is the second-largest airport in the world for origin and destination travel (as opposed to connecting flights). Only Los Angeles International is larger. Not surprisingly, McCarran has been in a



perpetual state of expansion for nearly three decades, keeping up with the headlong growth of tourism.

Bechtel has maintained a constant presence at McCarran since the first major expansion started in 1981. Since then, the company has managed all six phases of expansion, including the current project to build a new stand-alone terminal with a half-mile-long

concourse and an adjacent eight-level parking garage with space for 6,000 vehicles.

The new Terminal 3—covering 1.8 million square feet (167,225 square meters)—will add 14 gates, bringing McCarran's total number of gates to 117. Six of the new gates will be devoted exclusively to international flights.



“Terminal 3 will allow us to balance our travel demand, providing a better experience to all of our customers,” says Clark County Aviation Director Randall Walker. “T3 will reduce congestion in Terminal 1 and get it back to the level of passengers that it was

really designed for. At the same time, T3 will add to our capacity to meet the growing demand for international travel.”

During Walker’s 20 years at McCarran, the airport has had to come up with innovative ways to service

ever-increasing traffic. For example, McCarran is one of the world’s leading “common use” airports. Instead of having their own permanent gates, airlines can use any available gate and ticket counter simply by logging onto the airport’s computer network. This allows



for greater flexibility and maximizes the use of McCarran’s facilities, reducing delays and congestion.

The airport also has taken a state-of-the-art approach to baggage. Since 2005, radio frequency identification (RFID) chips in baggage tags have made it easy to keep track of bags and make sure they get on the correct flights. McCarran also developed software to control the flow of incoming baggage so that carousels are never overwhelmed. If more than three flights are using the same carousel, the network automatically assigns a second—and if necessary a third—carousel to spread out the traffic in the baggage area.

Technology will play a major role in enhancing the passenger experience in Terminal 3. McCarran will be among the first airports in the nation to feature automatic boarding gates that allow passengers onto planes by scanning a boarding pass or mobile device. In addition, new equipment will enable passengers to tag their own luggage, thereby avoiding long lines at check-in counters.

Terminal 3—the largest ongoing construction project in Nevada—is an exercise in logistics on a mass scale, with multiple contractors and an army of craft workers (nearly 2,000 at peak construction last December). It is Bechtel’s job to make sure everyone is pulling together to get the job done—without disruption of daily operations at one of the 20 busiest airports in the world.

“One of the things I’m most proud of is how we’ve been able to achieve this expansion while minimizing disruptions to the traveling public and to the airlines that service the airport,” says Don Wright, Bechtel project manager for Terminal 3. “The planning and scheduling effort is a very important part of what we do, because many of the project elements are interrelated. And in order to meet the operating needs of the airport, we have to carefully orchestrate and





integrate each piece into an overall program schedule.”

Bechtel’s ability to stay on schedule without disrupting airport operations is one of the main reasons for its long-term relationship with Clark County’s Department

of Aviation, which owns and operates McCarran.

“The unique thing about airports is that we have to operate while we build, and that’s a real challenge,” says Walker. “During the long-term relationship we’ve

had with Bechtel, we’ve been able to manage the complexity by developing policies that are a blend of Bechtel’s policies and McCarran’s policies. It works very, very well.”