

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Spokane Airport TREX Phase 1 Unveiling

May 30, 2024

Sen. Cantwell Opening Remarks

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Larry, and thanks for that kind introduction and for all your hard work here at the airport.

What a great day of celebration in Spokane. We're here at one of the largest airports not only for our state, but for the entire region. And we're here to make sure that we're celebrating the fact that we are adding more capacity.

I want to thank Mayor Brown, [City] Council President Wilkerson, Commissioner French, and Hallis Barnett of Garco Construction and the 1,600 workers across the building trades who worked around the clock, and apparently are still working, to help get us on track for this big day.

Spokane is definitely on the move. This Terminal C expansion, adding new gates, adding new flights has given Washingtonians more opportunity to go to places they want. And as was mentioned, by Larry, it also increases our own economic desirability for businesses and people who want to locate within this region because they have more opportunities.

Two years ago, I was here to talk about this project, and yes, help break ground. I think it was a little colder, a little windier day. But we all talked about how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law could help us and that is why we created, as Larry mentioned, the competitive Airport Terminal Program. Why? Because we realize in the United States of America, most economic development happens within just a few miles of an airport. So, if you're not investing in your airport, you're not investing in your economy.

The Terminal C expansion got some of those dollars. And some of the money, as Larry mentioned, from the Airport Infrastructure Grant Program and the Airport Improvement Program. And that is very important because these federal investments altogether I think are about 40% of this project.

Larry is doing a good job because he's reminding me that they still want some more in the next [round of] airport improvement [funds]. But that's why we have an Airport Improvement Program as part of the FAA bill that the President just signed for a new five-year authorization.

But once east end is finished next year, you're going to add a total of six gates. We're celebrating the west end today. But this added capacity means as I've mentioned, more opportunity for people in Spokane and the inland environment to go to places all across United States and that's what we want to see. Like the new nonstop to Charlotte, we want to see other

destinations to the East Coast, to the Midwest and obviously to the South, that will help us continue to travel to many, many more places.

Last year, Spokane had a record 4.13 million people traveling through the airport. And my guess is that with this new capacity, you're going to break all sorts of records.

Passenger experiences, as was mentioned, though, that's what we want to see. We want to see the improvement, so I can't wait for us to pull back these curtains and see what this new terminal looks like.

But the improved baggage handling system, easier to pick up and drop off, the energy savings, passenger amenities like food - trust me, I travel a lot, I'm a million-miler on two airlines, so when he's talking about food, I'm listening. And then the companion and care rooms for nursing mothers and families.

All of this makes Spokane airport a little friendlier to the traveling public. But it also improves, for those with disabilities, with technology and infrastructure, makes it easier for them to get to their destination as well.

So, Spokane Airport already generates about \$3 billion of annual economic impact in the Inland Empire. We think that this improvement today will help even grow more. [It] was mentioned by Larry, the Tech Hub is just another example of [how] building airport capacity here helps us attract the kind of robust manufacturing businesses that rely on their executives being able to get in and out of town, and to do business with other businesses around the country, and really, frankly, around the globe.

So it is helping grow the capacity of this region, and I couldn't be more excited. As mentioned, we passed the five-year reauthorization, it went to the President's desk, and that included \$4 billion for the Airport Improvement Program [per year]. So yes, there's more money for people to apply for. Very happy about that.

And we also secured a \$350 million reimbursement program to give airports more resources to deal with PFAS issues, and to help us get safer solutions for the future.

And for the consumer public, [we] passed the new refund law. If your flight's been delayed more than three hours and you have even a non-refundable ticket, you get the right to a refund. We are thinking about the traveling public.

Great to be here with the airport board, with all of you in the community that made this happen, happy to have been a partner on what is such a great success story, and can't wait to get on one of these flights myself in and out of this great new terminal.

Thank you all very much.