

Miami's airport wants to read your face. You might be happy about that

March 1 2018, by Howard Cohen, Miami Herald



Credit: Petr Kratochvil/public domain

Face it, going through airport security is a vital, but time-consuming pain in the you-know-where.

Miami International Airport hopes that using new technology that is already familiar to millions of smartphone users could reduce some of the bother.

MIA celebrated its newly renovated Concourse E federal inspection facility for international travelers. One of its main features: passport screening via [facial recognition](#) technology to verify travelers' identities by matching them to the documents they present.

"While other airports and airlines are partnering with (U.S.) Customs and Border Protection to test biometric exit screening for departing flights, MIA has the first facility fully dedicated to biometric entry screening for international arrivals," said Greg Chin, communications director for the Miami-Dade Aviation Department.

A pilot program at MIA began in November. That was a few months after JetBlue, with help from U.S. Customs, experimented with the technology in June for flights from Boston to Aruba. Delta also experimented with facial recognition at the baggage drop location at Minneapolis-St. Paul.

During the pilot program, cameras in the boarding area capture travelers' faces, which were scanned against the Customs database to locate a matching passport, visa or immigration photo.

Singapore's Changi Airport opened its new 21-gate Terminal 4 in October and it, too, uses the modern technology. In a November article in Travel Weekly, Sean Farrell, head of the biometrics team for the travel technology company SITA, said interest in the use of facial recognition at airports has grown globally.

MIA said its new technology-driven facility in Concourse E has been able to screen as many as 10 passengers per minute. The airport also

offers passport clearance via Global Entry kiosks and is one of 24 airports and one cruise port (Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale) that now accepts the Mobile Passport Control app.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which featured officials from the Miami-Dade Aviation Department and new aviation director Lester Sola, MIA also touted other aspects of its refurbished Concourse E to help reduce congestion at the busy [airport](#). The new federal inspection facility reduces walking distance for Concourse E and F passengers who previously only had access to the Concourse D passport hall.

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Citation: Miami's airport wants to read your face. You might be happy about that (2018, March 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-miami-airport-happy.html>

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