

San Jose airport shows off facial recognition for international flights

August 9 2018, by George Avalos, The Mercury News

Mineta San Jose International Airport demonstrated a facial recognition system that will make it the first West Coast airport to launch, for all international flights, a technology that officials said has already slashed the processing time for travelers.

Facial recognition uses a digital image or a video capture to verify or identify a person. The [airport](#) launched the facial biometrics system in June for all arriving international passengers. Starting this fall, it also will be used for all departing international travelers, officials said.

By using the technology, the average wait time for arriving international passengers has decreased by roughly four minutes per [passenger](#), federal officials estimated.

"The use of biometrics technology will help cut down wait times and enhance the overall experience for our international travelers," said San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo.

For a roughly one-month period before the airport adopted the technology in June for arriving international flights, the average wait time was 25.1 minutes, according to Brian Humphrey, director of the San Francisco and Portland field offices of Customs and Border Protection.

Over a four-week stretch after the system was launched at San Jose airport, average processing times for arriving international travelers had

dropped to 21.2 minutes, a roughly 16 percent decrease.

"Collaboratively, we are changing the face of international travel," said John Wagner, deputy executive assistant commissioner in the Office of Field Operations with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Passengers who arrived Monday, Aug. 6, in San Jose on a flight from Japan went through the system with no apparent hitches.

"This is a win-win," Humphrey said. "It's a win for protecting our border, and it's a win so those who wish to enter the United States legitimately can continue to do so efficiently."

Passengers looked into a small camera for a few moments to take their picture.

One [traveler](#) suggested the new technology made the arrival process more efficient than the old method.

"This seemed smoother than before," said Rikako Otomo, as she arrived from Japan and waited for her luggage. She traveled to the Bay Area to visit San Francisco and train with Apple and Google to sell the companies' phones in Japan.

The new technology comes as the airport in recent years has seen a sharp rise in passengers using the travel hub. In 2017, San Jose airport handled 438,800 [international travelers](#), more than doubling the 199,900 such passengers in 2015, airport officials said recently.

San Jose officials believe the airport's [new technology](#) will help it maintain its status as a hub for brisk air travel.

"The technology will help us keep our reputation as no-delay San Jose,"

said City Councilman Johnny Khamis, who heads the council's Economic Development Committee.

The [technology](#) could also be used for other interactions at airports, including buying items, said Stephanie Gupta, a senior vice president with the American Association of Airport Executives.

"This is just the start of the future," Gupta said.

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Citation: San Jose airport shows off facial recognition for international flights (2018, August 9)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-08-san-jose-airport-facial-recognition.html>

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