Delta to use facial recognition in Atlanta's international terminal

September 27 2018, by Kelly Yamanouchi, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Delta Air Lines plans to launch what it calls the nation's first "biometric terminal" by deploying facial recognition at multiple points in the international terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson.

At the Maynard H. Jackson International Terminal and Concourse F at the Atlanta airport, Delta plans to use facial recognition at check-in, at the security checkpoint, at boarding and at Customs processing.

Atlanta-based Delta says international travelers flying on Delta between Atlanta and other countries can use facial recognition instead of their passports to get through those checkpoints at the airport.

It's similar to what has been launched at other airports globally, including a biometric terminal opened last fall at Singapore Changi airport. Other airlines have also tested the use of biometrics at other airports.

In Atlanta, plans are for the technology to be at Concourse F gates at Hartsfield-Jackson by Oct. 15 and throughout the international terminal by Dec. 1.

However, international travelers will still need to bring their passports, and will still need to show their boarding passes at the Transportation Security Administration checkpoint.

And Delta's deployment of facial recognition for international

passengers in the international terminal doesn't change the process for those traveling on domestic flights, or people flying other airlines.

Passengers have the option to opt out of the facial recognition process, according to Delta.

Those who want to use facial recognition can approach a kiosk in the lobby and click "Look," or approach a camera at the ticket counter, the TSA checkpoint or when boarding. Once a green check mark flashes on the screen, the passenger can proceed.

Some privacy advocates have warned of risks of security based on facial scans.

A senior staff attorney with digital rights nonprofit Electronic Frontier Foundation, Jennifer Lynch has said she is wary of facial recognition, and sees a threat to privacy, "our constitutional 'right to travel' and right to anonymous association." And she said the greatest concern is the risk of a data breach.

The Delta rollout uses U.S. Customs and Border Protection's traveler verification service and software developed by NEC Corp. Customs is required by Congress to begin collecting biometrics of foreign visitors when they leave the United States.

"We see very few people choosing to opt out of the process, because it makes it pretty easy for them," said Customs and Border Protection deputy executive assistant commissioner John Wagner. "There's great potential here to change some of the pain points in the airport process, all based on some security mandates."

According to Delta, facial recognition can save up to nine minutes of time during boarding. Passengers on Delta partner carriers Air France-

KLM, Virgin Atlantic and Aeromexico can also use [facial recognition technology](link) in the international terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson.

"We're scaling first in Atlanta at Concourse F, and as we get experience with that we're going to look to scale it throughout our system ultimately," said Gil West, chief operating officer of Delta. "We think it will over time become the norm in the travel experience."

Delta has been testing facial recognition in recent years in partnership with Customs during boarding at Hartsfield-Jackson as well as in Detroit and New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. It has also tested biometric boarding and bag drop, partners with biometric firm Clear for expedited security lines, and allows Sky Club members to use their fingerprints to enter clubs.

Also at the international terminal, TSA will soon roll out new Computed Tomography (CT) scanners at two automated screening lanes, meaning passengers won't have to take electronics and other items out of their bags. TSA has been rolling out the new scanners at other airports around the country.

How it works

Customers flying direct to an international destination from Atlanta's international terminal can:

- Enter their passport information when prompted during online check-in. You can also enter passport information at the terminal.

- Click "Look" on the screen at the kiosk in the lobby, or approach the camera at the counter in the lobby, the TSA checkpoint or when boarding at the gate.

- Once the green check mark flashes on the screen, you can proceed.

Travelers will need to have their passports available and should always bring their passports when they travel internationally for use at other touch points during their trip.

Those who don't want to use the facial recognition technology can opt out.

Source: Delta Air Lines

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