

KEEPING CHANGI FLYING HIGH



Mrs Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Transport, unveiled ambitious plans to expand Changi Airport and visited the Changi East site.

The Changi 2036 Steering Committee (C2036 SC) recently announced expansion plans for the transformation of the 1,080 hectare site in Changi East. This major and highly complex development will boost Changi Airport's capacity to 135-million passenger movements per annum (mppa) and preserve Singapore's strength as an air hub as well as create new opportunities for Singapore and Singaporeans.

High Growth in Regional Air Travel

Air travel penetration – a measure of the number of trips made per population per annum – is extremely low in Asia, thus its potential for growth is tremendous. Today, Asia's air travel penetration rate is only 0.4, which is a sharp contrast to North America at 5.6 and Europe at 3.3. Driven by Asia's rising affluence, air travel will give rise to more business and leisure travel opportunities. By 2030, the volume of traffic within the Asia Pacific region will equal that of Europe and North America combined. By then, air travel penetration will have tripled, but it would still only stand at 1.1. Separately, Boeing estimates that air travel to, from and within

ASEAN in the next 20 years will grow by 6.5% annually. Within ASEAN, air traffic will grow even faster at 7.6% per annum.

Potential for Great Rewards

The Changi East development is an ambitious undertaking, slated to bring multiple advantages to local, regional and global stakeholders. The expansion plan will feature a mega Terminal 5 that will be one of the largest terminals in the world, with land set aside for an industry zone with facilities for airfreight and maintenance, overhaul and repair (MRO) activities, as well as a third runway for civilian co-use. This mammoth task is projected to be completed by the mid-2020s. By then, with the added 50 mppa capacity that Terminal 5 will provide, Changi's combined capacity will rise to 135 mppa, placing it on par with some of the busiest airports in the world – a timely development as Asia Pacific is expected to see the most robust air travel growth by then.

The Economic Development Board (EDB) indicates that there are direct benefits for Singapore's economy arising from the project. The trend of leading logistics and courier companies choosing to invest in Changi is expected to accelerate, along with aerospace operators expanding their footprints here in support of growing operations in the region. As a result, Singaporeans will see more jobs in the maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) and aerospace industries, as well as other positive spin-offs in related sectors such as business and tourism.

Connectivity is the Key

Changi East will further cement Singapore's status as the premier air hub in the region – and an important logistical node for the world. However, size is not all that matters, it is also about enhancing the island city's connectivity.

At a media briefing held on 30 August 2013, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Transport, Mrs Josephine Teo, remarked that the ongoing quest is to make Changi a qualitatively better airport. And the key to that is connectivity. "The more cities we are linked to, the more frequent the flights, the more efficient the transfers and the greater the convenience we can bring to passengers, the better we are as an air hub," she said.

To enable Singapore to further enhance its connectivity and capture a share of the already growing traffic in the region, it is essential for Changi to continuously work on establishing more destination links and increasing airline options for the passengers, adding to the growth of air traffic at Changi.

Step-by-Step, Hand-in-Hand

Planning and preparatory works for this complex project have already started. Changi East will not only usher in a new volume and mix of air travellers, it will also create, catalyse and facilitate more opportunities for Singapore and Singaporeans.

Given the extensive and complex scope of planning and developmental works involved – a third runway will need to be extended, a 3-runway system will need to be implemented, in addition to engineering studies that need to be done for land preparation works and traffic planning to facilitate ground transport links – a multi-agency approach is the way to go. The C2036 SC is supported in its efforts by eight government agencies, including CAAS, the aforementioned EDB, the Land Transport Authority along with airport operator, Changi Airport Group, to name a few agencies.

Ultimately, the C2036 SC is galvanised to work together to ensure Singapore's continued success as an air hub and the growth of its supporting industries. Changi Airport evokes a sense of national pride in the hearts of Singaporeans. It is not just an airport, it is also a symbol of Singapore's courage in exploring the world beyond its borders. "It is about a well-loved Singapore icon, and how we keep Changi flying high." aptly summed up by Mrs Teo.