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New kiosks greet travelers at Newark Liberty Airport. The changes are part of a \$325 million modernization of Terminal B.

Having flown in from Denmark, Ida Klitgaard clutched a few brochures she had just picked up from a new welcome center at Newark Liberty International Airport on Monday.

She and a friend, Lasse Moelleskov, were looking for ground transportation to reach their hotel in Manhattan.

"They told us the exact amount it would cost to go on to our hotel, so it was very useful," Moelleskov said.

Welcome centers are being placed throughout the three metro airports -- Newark Liberty, Laguardia and John F. Kennedy -- to distribute travel information in a central location. The centers have phones so passengers can call local hotels to check on accommodations, look for shuttle services or find out about tourist spots in New Jersey.

The welcome center is one of the features of the new lower level of Terminal B. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is spending \$325 million to upgrade the terminal as part of a project that will be completed by 2012.

"Modernizing and expanding facilities at Newark Liberty International Airport is crucial to keeping New Jersey economically viable," said Anthony Coscia, chairman of the Port Authority.

Narrow spaces at the 1970s-era terminal are being expanded to make room for travelers, who sometimes feel jammed at peak demand hours.

"These terminals were designed for people who came to Newark and then departed," said John Jacoby, general manager of the airport for the Port Authority. "They weren't designed for people who come here and are connecting to another city."

The airport is making the changes to accommodate future passenger growth. Passenger traffic at Newark Liberty is down 9.2 percent through June as a result of the recession. The airport handled 35.4 million passengers last year.



John Jacoby, Newark Airport's general manager for the Port Authority, in the new baggage area at Terminal B.

Across the country, the decline in passenger traffic "moderated in both premium and economy travel in June," according to figures released this week by the International Air Transport Association. Passenger travel fell 7.1 percent in June, stabilizing from May when traffic fell 9.2 percent, the trade group said.





Airports are upgrading their facilities to improve security and customer service, according to Raphael Bejar, chief executive of Airsavings, a Paris-based company that advises airlines on how to improve their efficiency.

"After 9/11 and the rise of security concerns throughout the United States, many airports had to drastically change their thinking and their operations," he said.

San Jose International Airport added new security check points, and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport is completing a \$3.2 billion overhaul of its facilities. Chicago's Midway airport and Baltimore-Washington International opened in-line explosives detection systems at their terminals in 2005 to make it easier to screen large numbers of baggage.

Newark's Terminal B is receiving a \$39 million in-line baggage screening system that should be completed over the next few weeks to check luggage for explosives. Conveyors behind the ticket counters will be linked to new high-volume screening machines.

Each machine can screen as many as 400 bags an hour, up from 140 bags now, Jacoby said. Transportation Security Administration personnel will screen baggage with the system.

The Port Authority is spending \$44 million to expand Terminal B to three levels instead of two. The lower level used to be a parking lot, which was closed after 9/11 because cars are no longer allowed under air passenger terminals. Terminal B's departures and arrivals space has increased by 10 percent, or 55,000 square feet on the lower level, where domestic passengers arrive to pick up their luggage.

Another \$13 million is being spent on new escalators and expanded elevators at Terminal B to accommodate families and the handicapped. The Port Authority also is spending \$27 million to upgrade electrical substations and emergency power generating systems.

When the modernization is completed in 2012, Terminal B will have more space in its international and domestic departures area.

"It's very constrained and narrow right now, and this will allow us to have more lanes so people can get to the gate," said Roger Prince, senior program manager for the port authority's airport facilities division.

The terminal also will have more restaurants and retail shops in the secure part of the facility.

"Most of our food and beverage service was in the public area," Jacoby said. "You will have a greater choice of food and beverage on the secure side when this is completed."

Some of the new eateries that are expected to open in the terminal include Blue Point RA Bar, Currito, Island Chicken, Subway, Java Moon and Famous Famiglia.

