Ground services

Mobile check-in

In 2017, our mobile boarding pass service was made available for all flights (including international) from our Astana and Almaty hubs. The service was also made available at Atyrau regional airport for domestic flights. With improvements in security, our Company was able to introduce an electronic system for passenger registration during airport screenings. This made it possible to introduce a paperless check-in procedure while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of human error. In October, the registration of passengers at airport screenings was enshrined in law, and we plan to expand this system to cover more areas. In addition, there are plans to transition to biometric technologies in the future.

Business Class lounge

In October 2017, the Shanyrak lounge reopened for passengers departing on domestic flights at the Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport. Along with its freshly renovated interior, the business lounge is also offering passengers a new menu. For Business Class passengers departing on international flights, our Company offers a VIP hall in the new terminal, which will be replaced by a private lounge next year.

Business Class check-in counters

Ground Services redesigned the Business Class check-in counters in 2017. Among other upgrades, the belt barriers were replaced with premium class barriers featuring a red rope, the red Business Class carpet was extended, an ottoman was installed near the counter area for hand baggage, and Business Class welcome signs were installed to identify the desk. These upgrades were assessed as part of the SkyTrax audit last year. During the coming year, we also plan to upgrade the Economy Class check-in counters.

New terminal at Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport

In July 2017, our Company transferred all international flights from Astana to the new terminal at Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport. The new terminal meets all international standards and allows us to develop a business that depends directly on network traffic, i.e. the transit potential of our hubs. The new terminal is equipped with a number of innovations that our Company is using, including the baggage control system, the baggage sorting system and the passenger registration system, among others. Equally important, the new terminal makes it possible to process around 1,800 passengers and 1,220 baggage units per hour. The expansion of the airport has helped increase the frequency of flights and relieve the terminal for domestic flights. We are currently working with the airport to increase transit capacity.

Almaty – baggage control system

In August 2017, a system for the gradual monitoring of the loading and unloading of luggage (BRS) was introduced at Almaty International Airport in cooperation with our Company. The introduction of the system has improved the efficiency of baggage control. The new BRS system tracks luggage during the entire time it is at the airport: from check-in until it is loaded on the plane. Passengers are able to retrieve their luggage more efficiently, and, thanks to the new technology, all luggage is transported quickly from aircraft to aircraft during transit flights.

Almaty – expansion of the transit zone

In September 2017, the area for transit/transfer passengers was expanded to 50 sq. m. In the area of the exit, the transit zone was expanded by 400 sq. m. at the expense of the VIP lounge. The expanded transit zone makes it easier for those passengers who need to catch a connecting flight to separate themselves from those who are entering the city. Furthermore, the new transit zone provides additional space for security lines and for the airport's second Rapiscan security system. All of these factors contribute to reducing passengers' waiting time.

Plans for the next 3-5 years

In the coming years, our Ground Services Department is planning to continue providing improved services, introducing new products, implementing several major projects and creating a complete ground handling system in Kazakhstan. In particular, the Department will continue to work on self-service for flights at major hubs (Astana and Almaty), as well as on services for other airlines. One area of focus will be the development of services for self-check-in of passengers and baggage, the simplification of various procedures, including the implementation of the Fast Travel concept and the introduction of new technologies, including biometrics.

Our Ground Services' strategic objective is to provide ground self-handling operations across our entire Kazakhstan network and to become a regional leader by expanding its services to other countries in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the CIS. Among Air Astana's advantages is that we are the only airline licensed to operate its own de-icing equipment at selected airports in Kazakhstan, and we also provide ground operations training in accordance with internationally accepted standards and practices.

The expansion of existing innovative technologies will require the implementation of cutting-edge services and products. The following are among key areas of development:

» Passenger and baggage handling. providing dedicated transfer check-in counters, frequent-flyer check-in, dedicated baggage drop-off counters, further development of self-check-in procedures, improved customer service in Business Class lounges, and fast-track and special assistance for passengers with restricted mobility

» Aircraft ground handling. Fast turnaround of aircraft to meet on-time performance targets, handling of priority baggage and fast offloading and onloading of transit baggage

» Aircraft de-Icing. De-icing with aircraft while its engines are running, setting up laboratory facilities for testing de-icing fluid, the construction of centralised facilities in Almaty and Astana

» Lost baggage. Increased capacity to track and locate lost baggage, to provide excellent service in handling passengers' lost baggage

» Working with departure control system (DCS) suppliers and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in introducing biometric passports and embedding advance passenger information (API) into passenger check-in facilities and in our own database of immigration requirements to avoid fines from immigration authorities

» Adopting the IATA's Fast Travel concept aimed at increased penetration of self-check-in services and optimised queue management.

The key drivers of the Fast Travel programme are the self-service options that offer passengers speed and convenience, while improving customer service and simultaneously reducing labour costs and queueing times. As self-service expands, mobile devices will be increasingly used for:

» passenger check-in, scanning tags, bar codes and identity documents

» ground handling with an optimised interface with other operational departments

» tracking and status-checking devices to improve monitoring of the movement of staff and equipment

» user-friendly display screens with accurate and up-to-date information.