The Airports Authority of India (AAI) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing the civil aviation infrastructure in India. This includes air traffic management services over Indian airspace and adjoining oceanic areas as well as management of 126 international/domestic airports and civil enclaves.

In 2013, AAI became a member of SITA, joining more than 400 airlines, airports, governments, air freight carriers and other stakeholders connected over a single communications network covering 17,500 industry sites around the world. As a result, the Indian aviation industry benefits from the SITA community’s investment in technology – reducing the total cost of ownership.

Indian airports and airlines use SITA’s state-of-the-art technologies to optimize infrastructure and available resources, bolster security and improve operational efficiency and profitability. This helps enhance the passenger experience without the airlines and airports investing time, money and resources to develop their own systems.

THE CHALLENGE

India is the world’s fastest-growing economy and is forecast to become the third-largest over the next two decades. It is also the world’s ninth-largest civil aviation market, with ambitions to become third-largest by 2020 and largest by 2030. International and domestic passenger growth is averaging 12% annually, reaching a combined 184.2 million in Financial Year 2015-16. Some projections expect passenger numbers to reach 450 million by 2023. Cargo and Air Traffic Movements are on the rise as well.

To keep pace with this growth, AAI must overcome a variety of current challenges, including limited terminal space, competition from private airports with modern processes and infrastructure, non-standard equipment/services, security concerns, budget constraints and passenger inconveniences such as long check-in queues. These shortcomings are reflected in ACI’s Airport Service Quality (ASQ) ratings of AAI airports.

To that end, AAI has put in place a series of initiatives, including:

- Terminal expansion and upgrades to accommodate passenger growth in metropolitan and non-metropolitan airports.
- Planning to operationalize 160 airports and airstrips to improve remote connectivity.
- Developed and upgraded over 38 airports in the last five years and AAI has planned US$1.6 billion for upgrade and expansion of 20 airports.
- AAI intend to invest US$115 million to upgrade five regional airports and US$184 million for revival of 15 non-scheduled airports.
- Improvements to the overall traveler experience such as world class passenger processing systems at 38 airports.
- Re-investing revenue in future projects and embracing innovative commercial models such as revenue-sharing and build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT).

“AIRLINES ARE NOW USING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, MAKING THEIR OPERATIONS MORE EFFICIENT WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PROVIDING A BETTER PASSENGER EXPERIENCE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO WORK WITH AAI TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE FOR BOTH PASSENGERS AND AIRLINES.”

MANEESH JAIKRISHNA
VICE PRESIDENT, INDIA AND SUBCONTINENT, SITA

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SITA SOLUTION

AIA is employing SITA’s AirportConnect® Open – a common-use passenger processing platform which allows airports to maximize the use of check-in counters and gates. For phase one in 2008, SITA successfully implemented AirportConnect Open common-use terminal equipment (CUTE) in 13 airports. An additional 25 airports were identified for phase two (2011-2016) for which SITA supplied 700 workstations together with AirportConnect S3 common-use self-service (CUSS) Kiosks and subsequently BagManager, SITA’s baggage reconciliation system (BRS) – which is now operational at Chennai Airport (MAA) and Kolkata Airport (CCU).

AirportConnect Open enables more efficient passenger processing by:

- Providing standard communications between all passenger processing peripherals.
- Making infrastructure ready for future initiatives such as self-boarding gates and self-bag drop.
- Enabling access to respective airline host functionality in real-time on shared equipment.
- Allowing any airline to use any agent desk, gate position or kiosk.

SITA’s AirportConnect S3 (CUSS) Kiosk can be dedicated to a specific airline or shared by multiple airlines. It can be used for a number of self-service processes, including booking, changing a reservation and check-in.

SITA’s CUSS kiosks offer services to passengers while allowing the airports to increase capacity during traffic surges – avoiding the need to invest in fixed check-in areas. With the CUSS kiosks, SITA is providing an end-to-end managed solution complementing other airport check-in services already available at 25 airports and which will be deployed in the remaining 13 airports before the end of 2016.

SITA’s BagManager matches bags with departing passengers and tracks bags in real-time – something all IATA member airlines will be required to do as the air transport industry moves closer to adopting an IATA resolution to this effect in 2018. BagManager tracks when bags are exchanged between airlines and ground handlers as well as airlines and airports. It also handles the tracking and monitoring of departure and arrival bags and supports interfaces to automated baggage tag readers. Benefits include: reduced mishandled bag costs, minimized departure delays, improved customer service, staff effectiveness and better security.
THE RESULTS

SITA successfully implemented CUTE in 38 airports in a concession model which helps increase non-aeronautical revenues for AAI. Today SITA is one of AAI’s most important concessionaires.

Results have been significant for other stakeholders as well:

• **For Airlines**
  - No capex or pay-per-use
  - Optimization in network connectivity
  - Ease in opening and closing airport stations
  - Optimized IT staff
  - Increased check-in counters on demand

• **For Airports**
  - IT modernization for both metropolitan and regional airports
  - Ability to attract more airlines and passengers

• **For Passengers**
  - Standard service across airports
  - Passenger-preferred self-service facilities
  - Faster check-in, less congestion

Overall, the project elevated SITA from an IT vendor to a true AAI partner, including:

• Long-term strategic engagement in various mission critical technology areas
• Fully outsourced services for passenger processing solutions
• SITA management of airlines’ expectations, contracts and billing in connection with passenger processing

Maneesh Jaikrishna, Vice President, India and Subcontinent, SITA, said “The Indian aviation industry is experiencing significant growth, and we are delighted to help facilitate the Airports Authority of India’s modernization and expansion program. Our solution allows AAI to process more passengers without incremental real estate or manpower investment. Airlines are now using the latest technology, making their operations more efficient while simultaneously providing a better passenger experience. We look forward to continuing to work with AAI to enhance the experience for both passengers and airlines.”