

## CALIFORNIA



Photographs by ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

**A PASSENGER** entertains himself with a game while waiting for his flight in an open area of the new 35,000-square-foot, \$45-million concourse.

# It's a new day at an old airport

The concourse at the Long Beach facility is part of \$140 million in improvements.

BY RUBEN VIVES

The new \$45-million concourse at Long Beach Airport has opened its doors, giving passengers their first look at a project 10 years in the making.

Scores of travelers — arriving and departing — made their way Wednesday morning through the 35,000-square-foot eco-friendly structure, with its rows of palm trees and native plants in an open courtyard.

The new terminal is also equipped with a fire pit and lounge chairs. The food area inside the northern concourse offers samples from Long Beach restaurants. Nearby, an iPad station equipped with card swipers gives passengers the opportunity to order food, shop, check their email or catch up on news.

It's a big change for Long Beach travelers, who have spent the last few years waiting for flights in cramped, temporary trailers. "It was mucky and disgusting," Even Ferrari, 35, recalled.

"We're proud of this," said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, who arrived before dawn Wednesday to participate in the grand opening.

When the first flight ar-



**TRAVELERS STEVE GOULD**, left, of Tustin and **Diane Armitage** of Laguna Beach check out the iPads.

rived from Las Vegas, Jet Blue employees clapped and cheered as they welcomed travelers and flight crew into the new terminal. They handed out T-shirts that read "I heart LGB" (the airport's code) and tiny cupcakes.

Livio Lippetti, 55, of Las Vegas said he was surprised. "This is sweet," he said. "They did a nice job here; I'm very impressed."

Long Beach Airport, which has been owned by the city since 1923, handles about 3 million commercial passengers a year and is served by a handful of airlines.

The airport is known for easy access and convenience for travelers who can usually get through check-in and security faster than at Los Angeles International Airport.

Dennis Anaya, a 35-year-old music producer, says he travels from his Sherman Oaks home to Long Beach to avoid LAX traffic and check-

in lines. Now with the new concourse completed, he says he'll be mostly traveling out of Long Beach Airport.

Long Beach officials said they spent a total of \$140 million on new construction and repair of most of the structures in the small airport. The work was financed mostly by federal grants and city bonds to be paid off over time with fees charged to airlines and passengers.

The renovation of the older terminal led to the discovery that several floor mosaics finished in 1941 were still in good enough condition to restore and display.

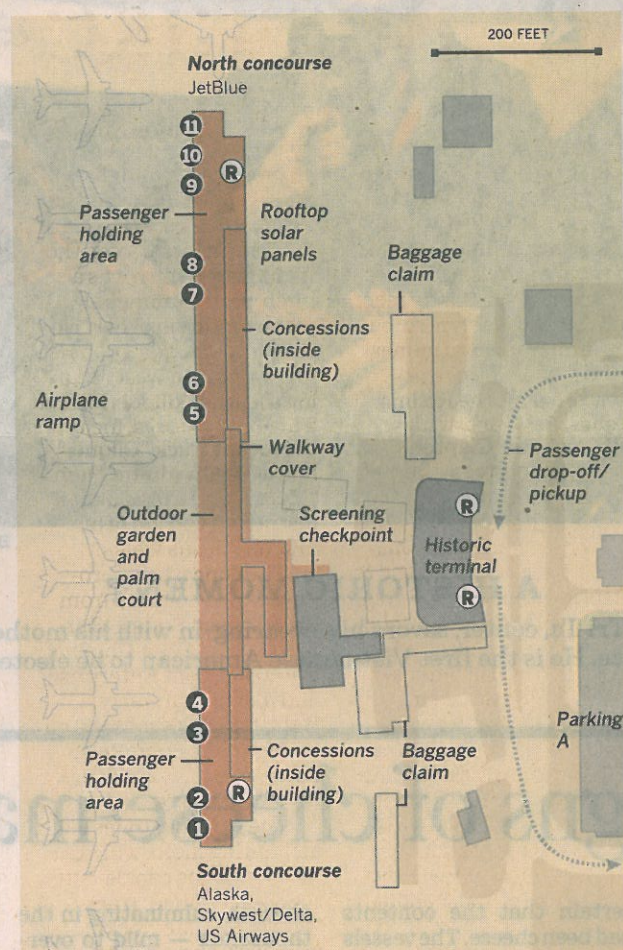
A lawsuit and planning delays caused the project to drag out for years, but officials say it was worth the wait. "It probably took a little longer than it should have, but we did it right and I'd rather do it right than do it fast," Foster said.

ruben.vives@latimes.com

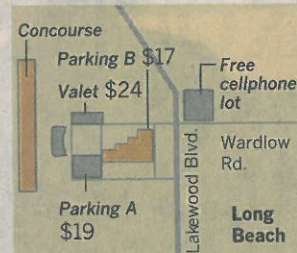
## A major upgrade

The \$140-million modernization project includes a new single-story concourse with 11 gates and a 1,989-space parking structure. The historic terminal, security checkpoint and baggage claim areas were refurbished. The concourse opened to fliers Wednesday.

■ New feature ■ Existing # Gate number ® Restroom

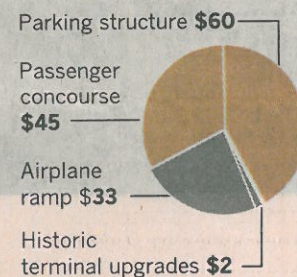


## Daily parking rates



## Modernization project cost

(In millions of dollars)



## Other features for travelers

**Power stations:** Stand-up work islands with outlets for electronics. Free Wi-Fi.

**iPad bar:** iPads (12) where travelers can check email, browse the Web and order from and have food delivered by concourse vendors.

**Bars:** Have USB outlets.

**Eat, shop, relax:** Ten vendors, most with local roots. Outdoor fire pit area.

Source: Long Beach Airport. Graphics reporting by TTA LAI

KHANG NGUYEN Los Angeles Times