

Press Office

City of Chicago, Department of Aviation
Nuria I. Fernandez, Commissioner



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CHICAGO AIRPORT SYSTEM INTRODUCES NEW ACCESSIBLE KIOSKS FOR TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Kiosks are equipped with public access videophones that provide video relay services for Deaf and hard of hearing

CHICAGO . The Chicago Department of Aviation, together with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, proudly presents the first new accessible kiosk at AccessChicago, the City's tenth annual products and services expo for people with disabilities held at Navy Pier. The kiosk on display is the first of eleven units that will be installed at O'Hare and Midway International Airports.

Thanks to these progressive new kiosks, travelers who are Deaf and hard of hearing or have speech impediments now have the ability to place a videophone call to request services or communicate with family, friends or another Deaf person using sign language.

Each new kiosk is equipped with a public access videophone (PAV), a multilingual touch screen monitor providing airport transportation and tourist information, and an overhead plasma monitor that features accessibility information about tourist attractions in the City of Chicago and streaming text announcements.

The most extraordinary feature of the kiosks is the PAV, a device that is capable of providing video relay service for Deaf and hard of hearing travelers. Video relay service is the functionally equivalent way for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals to place phone calls. With the PAV technology, a caller using sign language can communicate with another person via an interpreter through a video connection.

By providing the newest generation of videophone technology, the Chicago Airport System is recognized for offering the most sophisticated level of communications access possible for Deaf and hard of hearing travelers.

The Chicago Airport System is leading the industry by using new technologies to expand on services offered to all travelers passing through our airports, said Aviation Commissioner Nuria I. Fernandez. These specially designed kiosks that provide increased communication access for Deaf travelers will serve as a model for other airports around the country.

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Each kiosk is wheelchair accessible. The PAV comes equipped with a keyboard for users who prefer to use text-based relay services. Point-to-point video calls are also possible with the PAV, allowing users to communicate back and forth through sign language. There is no charge to callers using the videophone to access video relay service. Callers who wish to communicate via videophone with a family member or friend can charge the call to a credit card.

"This is an important step in our efforts to ensure accessibility for travelers with disabilities visiting Chicago," said Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner Karen Tamley. "We are constantly looking at ways to improve the experience of visitors with disabilities to our great city, particularly in light of the fact that Chicago was recently recognized as a top tourist destination for people with disabilities."

The PAV phone and touch screen information displays are primarily geared for people with disabilities, however, any traveler can use the system to video conference or access e-mail.

The project was made possible in conjunction with Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring public accessibility and increasing awareness of issues affecting the Deaf, hard of hearing and individuals with speech disabilities.

"Video communication, either video relay service or point-to-point, is the industry standard when it comes to Deaf and hard of hearing people's preference," said Ben Soukup, CSD Chief Executive Officer. "We applaud the City of Chicago's progressive attitude and efforts to make their airports the most accessible in the nation for our Deaf and hard of hearing constituents."

The first accessible kiosk will be located at O'Hare in Terminal 3 near gate K-1. Eight more kiosks will be installed in the upper and lower levels of the terminals and Bus/Shuttle Center at O'Hare and two kiosks are planned for Midway. The Department of Aviation is in the process of producing the units and will be rolling them out over the coming months with completion expected in early 2008.

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The Chicago Airport System is self-supporting, using no local or state tax dollars for operations or capital improvements at O'Hare and Midway International airports. Together, Chicago's airports generate more than \$45 billion in annual economic activity and create 540,000 jobs for the region. Please visit www.flychicago.com to learn more about the Chicago Airport System.

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