

NB BN VISION



As the pandemic wanes and air travel gears up, I have had several inquiries regarding the construction happenings at the Nashville International Airport® (BNA) and whether it is safe to fly. The short answers are: (1) A great deal of exciting upgrades and new developments are on board; and (2) Yes, it is safe to fly provided the posted precautions are followed.

To put the construction in context and provide some background, BNA has been one of the fastest growing airports in the country over the last decade, with passengers topping 18 million in 2019, a 14.2% increase over the previous year and the 7th straight year of record growth.

This growth, and the business it generates, makes BNA an engine of enormous economic activity for Middle Tennessee. According to a recent study, in 2019 alone, BNA generated more than \$8.1 billion in total economic impact, supported more than 76,000 jobs in the region, and produced more than \$443 million in state, local, and federal taxes. A similar study using a different methodology by the Tennessee Department of Transportation pegged BNA's impact at a remarkable \$9.9 billion. Any way that figure is calculated, it is clear that BNA is a highly valued asset for this region. It should be emphasized that this is all accomplished while receiving no local tax dollars.

Not surprisingly, the effects of COVID-19 dramatically curtailed air travel during the past year. In April 2020, for example, passenger traffic at BNA declined by a stunning 96 percent. Since that low point, travel has slowly increased, jumping this spring to roughly 60 percent of the 2019 figures, along with April 2021 proving to be the busiest month since the onset of the pandemic. More encouraging, the projections for near-

term air travel show much reason for optimism. Given our strong economy, combined with the increasingly successful vaccine rollout, air travel is expected to return to previous levels sometime over the next 18 months or so and to resume the steadily ascendant trajectory we have seen in previous years. Nashville, it seems, will soon be soaring once again.

BNA opened in 1937, and next year will celebrate its 85th anniversary. Last year, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority (MNA). This year, we celebrate the growth and success of both BNA and MNA over the decades. We get it, that with continued growth and anticipated increase in passenger numbers, BNA must provide the facilities necessary to meet growing demands and continue to serve as a major economic asset for Nashville. The expansion and renovation of our airport—a program known as “BNA® Vision”—is well underway and designed to provide a bigger, better airport for the future of Music City. Unfortunately, a few temporary inconveniences accompany improvements and progress. Thanks for your patience with these annoyances—they are worth the wait. To prevent last-minute stresses, plan ahead for professional or leisure trips by taking time to watch and listen to our local media outlets and check out construction alerts posted at [FlyNashville.com](https://www.flynashville.com). While there, also navigate to “Newsroom” to find current updates on flight routes and other matters of interest.

Work on BNA® Vision began more than three years ago, and if you have been anywhere near the airport recently, I am sure you have seen all the construction activity in and around the terminal. Just to name a few, some easily visible complet-

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ed projects are: two state-of-the-art parking garages, the new Concourse D that added six gates, an expansion of the ticketing areas, a new administration building, pedestrian plaza, and renovations within the terminal such as new flooring and upgraded baggage claim area. That means farewell to the bizarre, beloved BNA carpet.

Much of the work currently underway is related to expanding and renovating the central lobby of the terminal, eventually resulting in a security checkpoint with 24 lanes and an innovative marketplace concept with a variety of concessions, customer amenities, and compelling airfield views.

The most dramatic change is progress on erecting the new roof canopy using a 439-foot crawler crane to hoist 1,500 tons of steel into place over 100 working nights.

The canopy, which evokes the image of an airwave, will add a modern Music City flourish that will command attention from both the ground and the air. Its function is not only aesthetic, but practical, as it will connect the garages to the central terminal with an elevated pedestrian bridge over Terminal Drive. It will allow us to literally raise the roof at BNA, creating a more spacious central terminal that will enhance the customer experience, including providing a higher ceiling and taller windows that will allow the aforementioned airfield views (a time-honored tradition at BNA) and an abundance of natural light to illuminate the terminal. I make a motion that you take a brief break from RFPs, MSJs, and legalese to take a look at the progress via BNAVision.com.

Still on the horizon is a third parking garage, a Hilton-branded hotel, a modern International Arrivals Facility,

and roadway improvements—most all of which will be completed by late 2023. BNA also just announced another concourse—this one a free-standing satellite concourse to provide more gates and to facilitate the future expansion of the current Concourse A.

At a cost of \$1.4 billion, the overall project may be the biggest capital improvement program in the history of Tennessee. Throughout the process, BNA was able to embrace the many small, minority and women-owned business enterprises in the Nashville community that will participate with more than \$300 million in contracts integral to the project.

For another source of Nashville air travel enthusiasm, keep your ears open and eyes peeled toward the skies for newsworthy progress, ongoing recovery efforts from March 2020 tornado damage, and renovations at John C. Tune Airport (JWN) in West Nashville. Of particular legal interest, that airfield and facilities was named in honor and memory of John Childress Tune, a well-known Nashville attorney and NBA member, civic leader, longtime aviation enthusiast and one of the principal developers of the modern aviation authority concept. Mr. Tune was also a former chairman of the MNAA.

The bottom line: as we tame the pandemic, air travel in and out of Nashville is expected to resume its strong growth in the years ahead. We know the value of great infrastructure, and our airport is taking every necessary step to prepare for and facilitate the growth in this market. BNA is the front door in and out of Middle Tennessee, and we are well on our way to making it the world-class airport our world-class

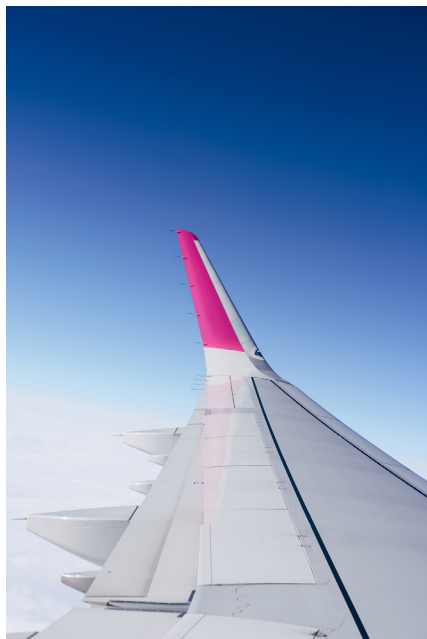
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“It City” needs and demands.

As for the health safety of domestic travel, BNA and the airlines have taken several measures to ensure the safety of the traveling public. Our airport has reinforced and enhanced its cleaning and sanitizing protocols, launched a public awareness campaign about CDC best practices, began distributing free face coverings, increased the number of hand sanitizer stations, and installed plastic shields at airline counters. And more technology advances have been incorporated or are on the way, including touchless elevator panels and germ-killing UV lighting for escalators and HUVAC air-handling systems. “Be Safe. Be Healthy. Be Nashville” emerged as BNA’s message to reassure travelers of the precautions taken at the terminal.

BNA took safety measures to protect the public by enhancing aircraft cleaning procedures, such as using hospital grade disinfectants and performing a daily deep clean. Also, most planes are equipped with HEPA filters,

so sitting in an airplane is probably safer than sitting in a crowded bar. For more information, check out the [CDC on Domestic Travel During COVID-19](#) and [FlyNashville.com](#).

Now is a good time to pack your bags. Safe travels, be well, and be sure to thank the BNA personnel, TSA teams, and your airline crews for their excellent assistance and courtesies, particularly amidst recent construction and COVID chaos. They are valuable ambassadors and public servants.

I cannot close without proper thanks and acknowledgements to Metropolitan Airport Authority President & CEO, Doug Kreulen, the entire MNAA staff, MNAA Board Counsel/NBA member Cindy Barnett, and my fellow members of the MNAA Board of Commissioners for their hard work, support, and leadership. Additionally, please join me in welcoming to the Nashville Bar Association, Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Chief Compliance Officer Neale Bedrock, who recently joined BNA. It has been my honor and pleasure to serve with this team.

Finally, I must convey my extra special appreciation and a shout out to Tom Jurkovich, BNA Director, Communications, and to Kym Gerlock, Vice President Communications and Public Affairs, for their help landing this article in the *Nashville Bar Journal*.

Signing off for now. Stay tuned. ■



TREY HARWELL, a Past President of the NBA, is a Member at Neal & Harwell, PLC. He also serves as Chairman of the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority.

Gadget of the Month

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lodging, try [Hotel Tonight](#), [Hotels.com](#), [Airbnb](#) or [VRBO](#) (as well as sites such as *Expedia* and *Travelocity*). If you like to camp, or you travel in an RV, trip, try looking for camping sites on [Recreation.gov](#) or on [The Dyr](#). Try [Hipcamp](#) if you want to go “glamping” in a yurt or a tiny house. If you are in an RV, try the [KOA](#) app or [RVParkFinder.com](#).

Trip Planning & Organizing

If you want to have an enjoyable trip, you should plan and organize your trip. You can emulate Phillip and put everything in OneNote that relates to your trip (*flights, places you are staying, rental cars, restaurants, etc.*). Or, you can try [TripCase](#), which will combine all trip related items into a chronology or itinerary (*and you can add notes to the list*). Another similar app is [Tripit](#). Tripit works by locating confirmation emails in your email box and building your itinerary from the confirmations. If you want to learn more about your destination, try [TripAdvisor](#) or [Culture Trip](#). The latter gives you interesting articles about your destination (*supposedly written by locals*). If you need help with deciding what to pack for your trip, try [PackPoint](#). PackPoint tells you what you should pack, based on the length of stay and the weather forecast and the resources available at your destination. If you want to meet some local people with interests similar to yours, try [Meetup](#) (*no, it is not a dating app*).

So, get out there and get ready to take your vaccinated body on an interesting and fun trip. ■

See you next month,
Bill & Phil