

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### THE 21<sup>ST</sup> AIR TRANSPORT RESEARCH SOCIETY CONFERENCE

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The Air Transport Research Society (ATRS) was launched as a special interest group of the World Conference on Transport Research Society (WCTR) during the 7<sup>th</sup> Triennial WCTR Conference at Sydney in 1995. Headquartered at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, ATRS is a platform for exchanging research ideas and results and facilitating multi-national and/ or multi- disciplinary research collaborations. Professor Tae Oum is the ATRS Founder and Chair and Professor Martin Dresner is the President and CEO. ATRS has its networking committee consisting of representatives around the group including researchers, economists, consultants and professionals. Since 2001, ATRS has been producing on a yearly basis a Global Airport Benchmarking Report. The report provides over 30 performance metrics for measuring and assessing effects of the operating environment and service quality of the airport, and airport management strategies such as business diversification, outsourcing, etc. Initiated at the University of British Columbia, the annual Global Airport Performance Benchmarking project is currently hosted at the David B. O'Maley College of Business at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. A task force, led by Professor Chunyan Yu, and consisting of 16 leading researchers from Asia Pacific, Europe and North America guides the development of the annual report released every summer. More than 200 airports and 20 airport groups are covered and benchmarked among peer airports worldwide and within the three regions currently including North America, Europe, and Asia Pacific & Oceania. With the objective of providing the most comprehensive and unbiased comparison of airports performance regarding productivity and efficiency, financial performance, unit cost competitiveness, and airport charges, the report currently consists of three parts. The first part provides a summary of the research methodology and main findings. The second part, which is the main body of the report, provides comparative assessments of airport performance and characteristics such as traffic volume, number of employees, terminal-airside capacity, and airport charges. The last part of the report presents a short profile of each airport, its new development and recent awards.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Air Transport Research Society (ATRS) World Conference was held in Antwerp, Belgium, on 5-8 July 2017. The conference was organized and hosted by the University of Antwerp on its beautiful campus. With the participation of 335 delegates from 40 countries worldwide including the top academia, industrial practitioners and experts, the conference started with 3 plenary and panel sessions. The ATRS president, Professor Martin Dresner, opened the conference along with Professor Eddy Van de Voorde and Professor Herman Van Goethem, University of Antwerp. Professor Ken Button, Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University, made the academic keynote speech. Mr. Brian Pearce, Chief Economist and Director at the International Air Transport Association, and Mr. Henrik Hololei, Director General

for Mobility and Transport at the European Commission, gave the industry keynote speeches. Industry and academic experts discussed the prospects of the air transport industry in the changing world. The key factors in affecting airports productivity and how these factors can be captured in the benchmarking analyses were discussed in the airport panel session. The airline panel session focused on the important research issues for the airline industry and how to enhance aviation research and industry collaboration for undertaking projects in these areas. The 21<sup>st</sup> Air Transport Research Society Conference had 49 paper sessions with 220 presentations on a wide array of topics related to aviation. The topics covered were very broad, and grouped into the following 21 categories:

1. Air Transport Policy & Regulation
2. Air Transport Demand
3. Air Traffic Control
4. Airline/Airport Economics
5. Airline Planning and Operations under Uncertainty
6. Airline/Airport Strategy, Management and Operations
7. Airline Network Development
8. Airport and Airline Performance
9. Aviation, Tourism & Economic Development
10. Aviation Safety & Security
11. Aviation Finance
12. Aviation/Airport Case Studies
13. Environmental Issues in Air Transport
14. Human Resources Management in Air Transport
15. Intermodal and Air Travel Alternatives
16. Low-cost Carriers
17. Marketing in Air Transport
18. Market Outlook and Future Development of Air Transport
19. Mergers & Alliances in Air Transport
20. Operations Research in Air Transport
21. Revenue Management & Pricing

The four-day conference provided a great venue for participants to share, exchange and discuss views about not only the most updated research topics and methodologies applied to the aviation field, but also the most relevant, timely management strategies, practices and tactics in dealing with the challenges facing the industry, today and tomorrow. On the day before the start of plenary and paper sessions, the conference successfully hosted a workshop for PhD student and Junior Faculty. The conference also provided two technical tours for delegates to visit Brussels Airport and Antwerp Airport, and one post-conference tour to visit DiamondLand in the Jewish Quarter. All these tours are interesting, and further enriching the experience of every participant from the conference. In addition to having a productive, successful conference, every delegate participating in the ATRS 2017 conference enjoyed the networking opportunity, and had a delightful time visiting the beautiful city of Antwerp, thanks to the hard work and great hospitality of the local organizers from the University of Antwerp and its Center for Maritime & Air Transport Management.