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Charleston airport lays out holiday parking plan as new deck construction cuts into space

BY WARREN L. WISE WWISE@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

NOV 18, 2019 UPDATED NOV 19, 2019



Travelers are urged to arrive 2.5 hours before their flights at Charleston International Airport since it could take time to find available parking while construction continues on a new 3,005-space parking deck. The new parking garage is expected to be completed in November 2020. Warren L. Wise/Staff **BUY NOW**

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Construction at Charleston International will cut deeply into most convenient parking spaces at the state's busiest airport during the busiest travel season of the year.

"It's going to be a little bit of a challenge to park everybody over Thanksgiving," airport CEO Paul Campbell said.

The main cause is work associated with a five-tier garage being built at Charleston International.

To counter the crush, officials outlined a plan Monday to steer holiday travelers to outlying lots where free shuttles will ferry them to and from the terminal every five minutes.



With construction of the new parking deck eating into available spaces, Charleston International Airport shows areas where travelers can park during the busy Thanksgiving holiday period. Provided/Charleston County Aviation Authority

About half of the spaces in the main surface lot — it has lost more than 1,000 of its roughly 2,300 spots — have been relocated to the remote parking areas that can accommodate 1,482 vehicles.

Officials also plan to free up more than 400 additional spaces in an employee lot near the terminal and at a newly built lot where ride-hailing services and taxicabs will be staged after the holidays.



Charleston International Airport's new five-tier parking deck is set for completion in November 2020, just ahead of the busy holiday travel season. The existing three-level garage is at far right. Provided/LS3P

"We are going to put people everywhere we can," Campbell said.

The Aviation Authority workers whose spots are being displaced will now park in a Boeing-controlled, shuttle-served lot where Aviation Avenue meets International Boulevard. Airport vendors and security agents already park there.



BUSINESS

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Work started on the new 3,005-space deck in the spring. The backup lots were completed last fall.

Airport officials estimate that more than 100,000 travelers will pass through the terminal from Nov. 27 until the following Monday.

"Thanksgiving is our busiest week of the year," Campbell said.

Holiday flyers this year are being encouraged to use public transportation, taxis and ride-hailing services if possible. Passengers who plan to drive themselves to the airport should arrive two hours and 30 minutes before their scheduled departure times, Campbell said.

"If you have to hunt for parking and then catch a shuttle, it could take at least an extra half hour," Campbell said.

BUSINESS

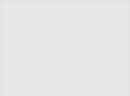
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Traffic will start picking up Monday, airport spokesman Spencer Pryor said.

If necessary, additional backup parking plans will be put in place, said John Robinson, manager of ground transportation.

Parking rates are the same as last year at Charleston International: **\$15 a day** for the garage and \$10 a day for spaces in the surface lots. Valet parking is \$21 a day.

The airport's board raised some parking fees in 2016 to bank money for the new deck. Work on the \$88 million project is expected to be completed before Thanksgiving 2020. When finished, it will include a covered walkway leading to the existing 1,268-space garage closer to the terminal.



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More parking is needed because of the airport's passenger growth, which has more than doubled since 2010 to slightly more than 4 million travelers last year. The figure for 2019 is expected to be between 4.8 million and 4.9 million.

"If we add another 400,000 people here next year, we may still have a problem parking them all during the holidays," Campbell said.

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HOLIDAY AIR TRAVEL TIPS

- **ARRIVE 2½ HOURS BEFORE DEPARTURE TO FIND PARKING AND GET TO THE TERMINAL.**
- **Pack carry-on bags wisely.** Go to the "What Can I Bring" section on the Transportation Security Administration website to see what can be packed in carry on and checked baggage. Passengers should be prepared to remove electronics, liquids, powders and food to be separately screened by the TSA.
- **Check flight status** with air carriers or on the airport website at www.iflyCHS.com.

Source: Charleston County Aviation Authority

WARREN WISE

Warren Lance Wise covers retail, real estate and Charleston International Airport for The Post and Courier. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, he holds nearly 50 local, state and national awards for journalistic excellence.