

# 2025 BUSINESS >> of AIRPORTS



June 23 - 25, 2025 // Arlington, TX // Loews Arlington Hotel

## FINANCE MODERATOR BOOK

Updated: June 12, 2025

### Welcome and Opening Remarks

**Marge Basrai**, *Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority; 2025 Chair, ACI-NA Finance Committee*



At MNAA, Marge is responsible for payroll, budgeting and accounting, cash and investment strategy, debt management and issuance, insurance and risk management, CIP and grant financial administration, oversight of rates and charges, and financial planning and analysis.

Ms. Basrai has 24 years of accounting and financial management experience in the aviation industry. She is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) and a Certified Member (C.M.) of AAAE. Ms. Basrai earned a B.A. in Accounting and an MBA from Michigan State University.

### Strategic Planning and Performance Management Working Group

Chaired by **Ronda Chu**, *Managing Director, Finance, San Francisco Airport Commission, San Francisco International Airport*



With over 25 years of experience in municipal finance, as a senior executive at SFO, Chu is responsible for overseeing the financial operations of SFO. Areas of leadership include strategic planning, budgeting, financial reporting, financial planning and analysis, revenue management, capital financing, risk management and ensuring the financial stability and growth of the airport. In her spare time, Chu enjoys taking walks with her husband and spending time with her two teens.

### Accounting and Financing Working Group

Chaired by **Abel Palacios**, *Vice President, Finance, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport*



Abel Palacios is the Vice President of Finance at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. He has over 30 years of experience in strategic finance, business analysis and financial accounting. In his role, Abel provides business leadership for the Airport by directing financial and business processes including accounting, accounts receivables, accounts payables, payroll, financial reporting, financial planning, operating budgets, capital budgets, collections call center and airline settlement of rate fees and charges. He also directs the activities of the Accounting and Planning sections of finance and administers the financial provisions of the Airport Use Agreement, bond documents, lease agreements and permits.

Abel began his career with Ernst and Young in 1988, then moved to American Airlines in 1991, where his duties included managing the accounting and recording of all passenger sales, which totaled more than \$1 billion per month. After a series of promotions, Abel joined AMR Services Corporation, where he was responsible for the financial reporting and accounting of the company's domestic and international locations.

Abel holds a Master of Business Administration from Texas Christian University and a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Texas. In addition, Abel is a certified public accountant and a former EMBA Alumni Board member with TCU.

### Financial Regulations and Policy Working Group

Chaired by **Kathleen Sharman**, *CFO, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority*



With more than 25 years of senior financial leadership experience across multiple transportation modes and public and private industries, Kathleen Sharman serves as the Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. The Aviation Authority operates and manages Orlando International Airport, the busiest airport in the state of Florida, and Orlando Executive Airport. Orlando International Airport served nearly 58 million passengers in 2023, making it among the Top 10 busiest airports in the United States. As Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Sharman is responsible for managing a \$831 million-dollar-plus annual operating budget and a \$5.1 billion capital program.

Prior to joining the Aviation Authority, Ms. Sharman was CFO and Treasurer of the New Jersey Transit Corporation, one of the nation's largest providers of bus, rail, and light rail transit with more than 11,000 employees and an operating budget exceeding \$2 billion. Her experience also includes CFO and Treasurer positions at Georgia's State Road and Tollway Authority and the South Jersey Transportation

Authority, operator of the Atlantic City Expressway and the Atlantic City International Airport.

Ms. Sharman began her career at Arthur Andersen & Company, formerly a "Big 8" accounting firm, and has held corporate Controller positions for several private sector companies in the solid waste and real estate industries. She holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration from George Washington University and is a Certified Public Accountant. She was recognized by The Bond Buyer as one of the 2018 Trailblazing Women in Public Finance. In 2021 she was named Airport Council International's (ACI) Finance Professional of the year (Large Airports) and was one of Orlando Business Journal's Women Who Mean Business for 2022.

Dedicated to sound financial principles and promoting professional ethics, Ms. Sharman is currently a member of the Board of the Women in Public Finance - Florida Chapter. She served as Chair of ACI's Finance Steering committee for 2022 and was a member of the ACI Board Finance Committee in 2023. She also currently serves on ACI's Finance Steering Committees and World Economics

Committee. She is currently the Chair of the Audit Committee for the American Association of Airport Executives.

### **Airport Business Working Group**

Chaired by **Tony Conza**, *Vice President, Finance, Tampa International Airport*



Tony Conza is the Vice President of Finance for Hillsborough County Aviation Authority (TPA). Tony has progressively taken on additional responsibilities since joining the Authority as a Sr. Commercial Analyst in 2011. Tony is a graduate of the University of Florida and has received his Certified Member designation by AAAE. Tony was recently recognized as a 40 under 40 Honoree by the Tampa Bay Business Journal and is an active member of ACI's Finance Steering Committee as Working Group chair of the Airport Business Working Group.

### **Finance Committee Meeting**

Chaired by **Marge Basrai**, *Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority; 2025 Chair, ACI-NA Finance Committee*



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### **Session 2A/B: Striking the Balance: How Chief Financial Officers and Chief Commercial/Revenue Officers Drive Airport Projects Together (Joint Session with Commercial Management Committee)**

**Brandy James**, *Chief Financial Officer, Charleston County Aviation Authority*



Brandy James is an experienced financial professional with more than 20 years of experience. She currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer at the Charleston International Airport. In this role she oversees Finance, Procurement, Properties and Diversity Business Enterprise operations. Prior to this position Ms. James served as the Chief Financial Officer at the Richland County Recreation Commission where she oversaw Finance and Procurement operations.

Prior to Richland County Recreation Commission, Brandy served as Senior Analyst, Senior Accountant, and Senior Auditor at SCANNA, a regulated electric and natural gas public utility. Brandy also worked as a Senior Financial Analyst at BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina and served as staff accountant at Moore Kirkland & Beuston, LLP.

Brandy is a Certified Public Accountant and holds a Master of Science in Accountancy and BS in Accounting— both degrees are from the College of Charleston.

### Session 3A: Navigating Economic Vertigo: Airport Finance Resilience Planning

**Kathleen Sharman, CFO, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority**



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Ms. Sharman began her career at Arthur Andersen & Company, formerly a "Big 8" accounting firm, and has held corporate Controller positions for several private sector companies in the solid waste and real estate industries. She holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration from George Washington University and is a Certified Public Accountant. She was recognized by The Bond Buyer as one of the 2018 Trailblazing Women in Public Finance. In 2021 she was named Airport Council International's (ACI) Finance Professional of the year (Large Airports) and was one of Orlando Business Journal's Women Who Mean Business for 2022.

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### Session 4A: The Strategic Capital Improvement Program Financial Planning – Challenges and Solutions to Volatile Capital and Operating Environment

**Bryan Benefiel, Deputy General Manager & CFO, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport**



Bryan Benefiel is the chief financial officer and deputy general manager of Hartsfield-Jackson. In his role, he oversees more than 100 employees in eight units including capital finance, financial planning & analysis, risk management, revenue, budget and IT. A certified public accountant, he monitors ATL's nearly \$1 billion annual budget and oversees the financing needs for ATLNext, the Airport's multibillion-dollar capital improvement program.

Mr. Benefiel has more than 20 years of experience in finance and accounting roles, with experience in the public and private sectors. His experience includes strategic planning, financial planning and analysis, financial reporting, budgeting, capital finance and business process improvement.

Mr. Benefiel joined the Airport in 2012 as the director of financial planning and analysis. He was promoted to assistant general manager of finance and accounting in early 2019. Prior to joining the Airport, he served as director of general accounting for the City of Atlanta's finance department. In this role, he was a key player in the financial and business process improvements improving the City's financial strength. Prior to joining the City, Mr. Benefiel served as the director of accounting for the American Cancer Society.

As the recipient of several financial and airport certifications, Mr. Benefiel is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Management Accountant, and Certified Financial Manager. In the airport industry, he is a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives and earned the International Airport Professional designation, a professional designation of Airports Council International and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Mr. Benefiel earned a Bachelor of Science in accounting from the University of Central Oklahoma.



## Airport Finance Roundtables by Hub Size

### Large Hub Airport Finance Roundtable

#### **Brian Butler**, *Airport Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Salt Lake City Department of Airports*



Brian Butler is the Chief Financial Officer of the Salt Lake City Department of Airports. He received his Bachelors degree in Corporate Finance from Brigham Young University, an additional Bachelors degree in Accounting from Utah Valley University, and a Masters of Accountancy from the University of Utah. Brian is a CPA and belongs to both the Utah Association of Certified Public Accounts as well as the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Prior to joining the Airport in 2015, Brian worked in public accounting as an auditor for Eide Bailly. In his current role as CFO of the Airport, he is responsible for overseeing the construction budget and debt financings of the New SLC in addition to the day to day finances of the Airport.

#### **Julia Hodge**, *Vice President, Supply Chain Management, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority*



Ms. Hodge is Vice President for Supply Chain Management, responsible for the Airports Authority's Procurement and Contracts and Supplier Diversity Functions. She joined the Airports Authority in September 2009 and held leadership positions in the Office of Finance, Office of Audit and Office of Corporate Risk and Strategy, where she served as the Deputy Vice President responsible for the organization-wide governance, compliance, and strategic planning. Ms. Hodge was an auditor and management consultant with PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP for 10 years prior to joining the Airports Authority. A Certified Public Accountant in the Commonwealth of Virginia, she is a graduate of Boston College (B.S., Accounting, 2000) and Georgetown University (E.M.L., 2012).

### Medium Hub Airport Finance Roundtable

#### **Dave Amdor**, *Director of Finance, Southwest Florida International Airport*



Dave Amdor, CPA, C.M. is the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Lee County Port Authority, operator of Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) and Page Field (FMY) in Fort Myers, Florida. Amdor is responsible for overseeing the areas of finance, budgeting, procurement and the Capital Improvement Program.

He came to the Lee County Port Authority with more than 12 years of public and private accounting and finance experience. Previously, he worked in various finance roles for the Omaha Airport Authority, responsible for operating Eppley Field (OMA) in Nebraska. He started his career as an auditor at Deloitte & Touche, L.L.P.

Amdor has a Master of Business Administration and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois.

Amdor is a Certified Public Accountant and a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA).

#### **Brandy James**, *CFO, Charleston International Airport*



Brandy James is an experienced financial professional with more than 20 years of experience. She currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer at the Charleston International Airport. In this role she oversees Finance, Procurement, Properties and Diversity Business Enterprise operations. Prior to this position Ms. James served as the Chief Financial Officer at the Richland County Recreation Commission where she oversaw Finance and Procurement operations. Prior to Richland County Recreation Commission, Brandy served as Senior Analyst, Senior Accountant, and Senior Auditor at SCANNA, a regulated electric and natural gas public utility. Brandy also worked as a Senior Financial Analyst at BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina and served as staff accountant at Moore Kirkland & Beauston, LLP. Brandy is a Certified Public Accountant and holds a Master of Science in Accountancy and BS in Accounting— both degrees are from the College of Charleston.

#### Small / Non-Hub Airport Finance Roundtable

##### **Kim Allison**, *Vice President, Chief Financial Officer, Tucson Airport Authority*



My 30+ year career has exposed me to a variety of industries. Prior to joining the airport industry, I spent most of my career in public accounting. My airport career began just prior to the onset of the Pandemic in 2020 as the CFO of Gulfport-Biloxi (GPT). After three years with GPT, I joined Tucson International (TUS) in 2023 as the Vice President of Finance and CFO.

##### **Marsha Johnson**, *Deputy Director, Airport Finance and Administration, Tallahassee International Airport*



Marsha Johnson is the Deputy Director of Airport Finance and Administration at Tallahassee International Airport. She joined the airport in March 2020.

Ms. Johnson has over 35 years of professional experience serving the public and private sectors. Her experience includes strategic finance, business analysis and financial accounting.

Ms. Johnson began her career with KPMG and then moved on to work in several key positions for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). She retired from FDOT after over 30 years of service and joined Tallahassee International Airport.

Ms. Johnson earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting from the University of Texas at Austin. Ms. Johnson is a licensed Certified Public Accountant and a member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

#### Session 7A/B: Roundtable with Airlines

##### **Donnell Harvey**, *Vice President, Aviation Real Estate, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport*



Donnell Harvey is a passionate aviation enthusiast with over 25 years of Commercial Aviation experience; Donnell Harvey currently serves as the Vice President of Aviation Estate at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. He currently leads a team that serves as the primary liaison between the airport and its airline partners, navigating a broad range of operational and strategic initiatives.

During his tenure at Delta Air Lines, Donnell played a pivotal role in the real estate strategy for the Seattle (SEA) hub and was instrumental in accelerating the build-out of the new Salt Lake City (SLC) airport expansion project. His diverse background also includes critical contributions to Amazon Air's rapid U.S. expansion during the pandemic, as well as earlier roles with the City of Atlanta.

Donnell holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Georgia State University and a Master of Business Administration from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

##### **Jeff Schulthess**, *Executive Vice President, Landrum & Brown, Inc.*



Jeff has more than 31 years of experience in the aviation industry and has been involved with projects/efforts at over 50 airports during his career. He joined Landrum & Brown (L&B) in 2018 following 24 years of experience as an airport consultant with other firms, and experience as a corporate real estate representative and operations analyst with United Airlines.

Jeff provides financial, business, and other consulting services to numerous U.S. airports. These services include financial feasibility analyses in support of nearly \$18 billion in airport revenue bond issuances, airline use and lease agreement and other airport tenant negotiations, airline rates and charges analyses, airport capital program feasibility analyses, benefit-cost analysis and FAA letter-of-intent support for AIP grant funding, and aviation demand forecasting.

As a former airline representative, Jeff has negotiated the business terms in airline-airport use and lease agreements from the "other side of the table" as well. Jeff also prepared various financial analyses for United's major hub airports, including airline rates and charges and airport capital development analyses.

He received a Bachelor of Science (Aviation Management) from The Ohio State University and a Master of Business Administration from Northern Illinois University.

**Session 8A/C: How to Manage Disruptions – Supporting Workforce and Financial Implications (Joint Session with HR Committee)**

**Marsha Johnson**, *Deputy Director, Airport Finance and Administration, Tallahassee International Airport*



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Ms. Johnson has over 35 years of professional experience serving the public and private sectors. Her experience includes strategic finance, business analysis and financial accounting.

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