

# 2025 BUSINESS >> of AIRPORTS



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## FINANCE TRACK SPEAKER BIO BOOK

Updated: June 16, 2025

### Strategic Planning and Performance Management Working Group



**Dafang Wu**, *Director*, DWU Consulting

Dafang Wu has more than 25 years of airport consulting experience and developed financial forecasts to support more than \$20 billion of airport revenue bonds. He has provided many airport finance education materials and data at <https://dwuconsulting.com>.

### John (J.T.) Knadler, *Executive Director*, J.P. Morgan



J.T. Knadler joined J.P. Morgan's Public Finance Group in 2018 after spending 7 years at another large Wall Street investment bank and leads J.P. Morgan's coverage of airports in the Eastern, Southeastern and Southwestern regions. J.T.'s airport experience includes senior managed financings for DFW Airport, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, Louisville Regional Airport Authority, and Oklahoma City Airport Trust, among others. Additionally, J.T. has led credit facilities for Salt Lake City International Airport, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Dallas Love Field. Outside of the airport space, J.T. leads J.P. Morgan's coverage of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (NY), the State of New York and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Prior to his public finance career, J.T. served as the Staff Director of the New York State Senate Transportation Committee. J.T. is a graduate of the Yale School of Management and University of Kentucky.

## Accounting and Financing Working Group

**Pamela Hill**, *Partner*, Plante & Moran



Pam is a partner in Plante Moran's governmental practice and the lead partner of Plante Moran's national airport practice. She has been working with governmental clients for over 25 years. She started working with airports over 20 years ago and that is when her strong passion for this industry began. She specializes in audit engagements including those with single audits, PFC and CFC audits, and many that are submitted to the GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting program. She is a member of the Association of Airport Internal Auditors and the Airports Council International – North America, where she has presented on various topics specific to airports. She is also a member of the American Association of Airport Executives, where she chairs the finance and accounting working group. She is also a member of the AICPA; MICPA; FICPA, and American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

**Douglas Kilcommons**, *Managing Director, Public Finance*, KBRA

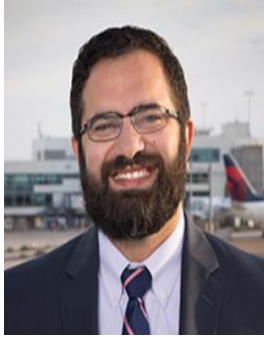


Douglas J. Kilcommons is a Managing Director at KBRA. As a senior member of the Public Finance team, and Rating Committee chair, he is responsible for assigning and maintaining debt ratings on municipal issuers. Doug is KBRA's lead analyst on several large hub airports, including Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, and Miami International Airport, and has rated inaugural debt issued by several small hubs, most recently Reno-Tahoe International Airport. Doug is active in the airport industry, and is frequently called upon to speak on credit trends and other finance/debt related topics at industry conferences and seminars.

Prior to joining KBRA, Doug served as a Senior Credit Officer at First Republic Bank and held senior credit positions at Wells Fargo Bank, Moody's Investor Service, and Fitch Ratings. Doug earned a B.S. from the State University of New York at Binghamton, and an M.B.A. from Pace University.

## Financial Regulations and Policy Working Group

**Steven L. Osit**, *Attorney at Law, Kaplan Kirsch*



Steven Osit represents public entities throughout the United States with respect to the development and operation of airports. Steven has counseled clients on a wide range of federal regulatory matters and the negotiation of complex airport transactions, including aeronautical and non-aeronautical development and airline use and lease agreements. Steven frequently represents clients in administrative and judicial litigation arising from regulatory compliance, contract disputes, accident investigations, and the review of federal agency actions and rulemakings. Steven has served as the Chair of the Federal Bar Association's Transportation Section, and as an Associate Member of the ACI-NA Legal Affairs Committee's Steering Group. Steven began his legal career as an Honors Attorney at the U.S. Department of Transportation and clerked for the Office of Aviation and Admiralty Litigation in the U.S. Department of Justice during law school. Prior to law school, he was the Director of Information Technology at a prominent New York City college. Steven is a certificated private pilot.

**Jesse Carriger**, *Deputy Director, Planning and Programming, Office of Airports, Federal Aviation Administration*



Jesse Carriger Over the last 25 years, Jesse has held a variety of leadership positions in the FAA's Office of Airports and is current the Manager, Infrastructure Branch, in Washington Headquarters. Jesse is leading the Office of Airport's efforts implementing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant programs, along with serving as the national lead for the FAA's State Block Grant Program. Jesse previously served as the National Manager of the Airport Improvement Program in Headquarters, where he managed the daily operations of our \$3.35 billion grant program. Outside his Headquarters experience, Jesse served in a variety of regional and field leadership positions and has been a Part 139 certification/safety inspector early in his FAA career. Jesse holds a degree in Business Aviation from Parks College of St. Louis University and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) with an emphasis in Finance.

## Airport Business Working Group

**Michael Garnier**, *Assistant Director Finance & Administration, San Antonio Airport System*



As the Assistant Director - Finance and Administration, Michael Garnier leads a team committed to optimizing the financial performance of the airport. Michael oversees a \$170 million annual operating budget and a \$2 billion capital budget, driving the airport's financial health and operational efficiency. Prior to SAT, Michael served as the Senior Regional Leader of Airport Affairs for Southwest Airlines, where he managed territories that included Minneapolis, San Antonio and Louisville, Kentucky. His experience in the airline industry has equipped him with a deep understanding of the complexities of airport operations and stakeholder engagement.

Academically, Michael holds a master's degree in business administration and a master's degree in industrial/organizational psychology. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education degree in Aviation and Space Education at Oklahoma State University. Additionally, he is a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), reflecting his dedication to professional excellence in the field.

**Tim Simon**, *Vice President - Finance and Revenue Development, Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Airports Commission*



Tim Simon serves as Vice President of Finance and Revenue Development at the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) which owns and operates Minneapolis-St. Paul International (MSP) and six general aviation airports in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Mr. Simon oversees Finance, Commercial Management and Airline Affairs and Insurance/Risk Management departments at MAC. Mr. Simon has 20 years of experience in finance and auditing roles for governmental organizations. He joined the MAC after serving as the chief financial officer at the city of St. Louis Park. Prior to that, Mr. Simon was the finance director at the city of Elk River. He also spent five years at the Minnesota State Auditor's Office. He holds a B.A in accounting from the College of St. Scholastica and M.B.A. in finance from the University of St. Thomas.

## Finance Committee Meeting

**Kenneth D. Simonson**, *Chief Economist*, The Associated General Contractors of America



Ken Simonson has been Chief Economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, the leading construction trade association, since 2001. He provides insight into the economy and what it implies for construction and related industries through frequent media interviews, presentations, and the Data DIGest, his weekly one-page e-newsletter that goes to more than 20,000 subscribers.

Ken has over 40 years of experience analyzing, advocating, and communicating about economic and tax issues. He currently serves as an advisor to the Census Bureau's construction data re-engineering initiative. He is a Fellow and past president of the National Association for Business Economics, and he is co-director of the Tax Economists Forum, a professional meeting group he co-founded in 1982.

Ken has a BA in economics from the University of Chicago, and an MA in economics from Northwestern University.

**Ira Smelkinson**, *Managing Director, Investment Banking Division – Public Finance*, Loop Capital Markets



Ira Smelkinson leads Loop Capital Markets Transportation Investment Banking group based in New York. He has over 30 years of experience as an investment banker raising funds for capital development projects nationally for airports of all sizes. He has also served as an advisor to bidding consortia in connection with the private development of airport related projects, including terminal, cargo, FBO and parking opportunities. He holds an accounting degree from the University of Maryland and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

**Chris Phelan**, *Senior Vice President, Policy, Industry and Government Affairs*, Canadian Airports Council



Chris Phelan is Senior Vice President, Policy, Industry and Government Affairs for the Canadian Airports Council (CAC).

Previous to this role, Chris was the vice president of aviation security and industry affairs. He oversaw airport security policy and regulations for passengers and cargo, international air policy and other issues affecting airport security and facilitation. In addition to these duties, he also served as committee secretary to the CAC's Small Airports Caucus and the Security Committee.

Prior to joining the CAC in June 2011, Chris worked as a consultant for an Ottawa-based government relations and public affairs firm. There he provided political, strategic and public policy advice to clients on a wide variety of issues, including product defense, intellectual property and copyright legislation, electronic product stewardship, and energy transportation and generation.

Chris is a graduate of the University of King's College, where he earned an honours degree in political science and history. He also holds a master's degree in political science from Northeastern University.



**Slava Cheglatonyev**, *Director, Economic Policy & Sustainability, Airports Council International (ACI) World*



Slava has a robust aviation background with over 15 years of executive experience. At ACI World, his primary responsibilities encompass economic policy, advocacy, and committee management. Previously, he served as a Senior Advisor on Economics at ACI EUROPE and as the Chief Commercial Officer at hub and regional airports. His expertise includes economic policy, airport strategic planning and marketing, aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue management, and route development. Slava holds a PhD in Economics, an MSc in Aviation Management, and a Master's Degree in Air Transport Management, among other qualifications.

**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)**

**Jason Mehl**, *Chief Commercial Officer, Syracuse Regional Airport Authority*



Jason Mehl brings over 27 years of experience in business management, with a background that includes operations, finance, sales, marketing, and human resources. He currently serves as Chief Commercial Officer for the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority, where he is responsible for non-aeronautical revenue development, including concessions, parking & ground transportation, marketing, land development and general aviation. Mehl first worked with the Authority in 2020 through a temporary consulting role and joined the organization full-time in 2021. Earlier in his career, he worked at KPMG before spending nearly two decades helping grow a family-owned specialty retail business into one of the nation's top 10 in its sector, where he ultimately served as President and CEO. He holds a B.S. in Accounting from Le Moyne College, is a Certified Public Accountant in New York, and a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives.

**Robin Watkins**, *Chief Financial Officer, Syracuse Regional Airport Authority*



Robin Watkins is a seasoned financial and operations executive with over 35 years of experience across industries including public accounting, healthcare, and manufacturing. She currently serves as Chief Financial Officer for the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority (SRAA) and is a key member of the executive leadership team guiding the ongoing transformation of Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Prior to joining the SRAA, Robin held senior leadership roles, including Director of Operations at a global industrial pump manufacturer and Chief Financial Officer at a regional health care facility. In these roles, she consistently drove operational efficiencies and improved financial transparency. Robin holds a B.S. in Accounting from SUNY Oswego, is a Certified Public Accountant in New York, and a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives.

**Kate Sullivan**, *Chief Commercial Officer, Philadelphia International Airport*



As Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Kate is responsible for air service development, cargo development, concessions, retail, food and beverage, parking, real estate development and all other commercial activities at the airport.

Prior to becoming CCO, Kate was Vice President, Business Investment and Regional Marketing at the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia. She previously served at the Department of Aviation as Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Director of Marketing + Brand.

Kate is a serial intrapreneur with a track record of building relationships, launching new programs, and scaling functions within organizations. She focuses on nurturing meaningful relationships with business partners, customers, and stakeholders for growth in revenue, engagement and impact.

Before her DOA career, Kate was Vice President, Digital Engagement at Harte Hanks, where she led operations and product innovation for digital agency services.

**Tracy Borda**, *Chief Financial Officer*, Philadelphia International Airport



As Chief Financial Officer of PHL and PNE Airports, Tracy is responsible for the Airport's financial strategy and oversees all financial functions including financial reporting and forecasting, treasury and investor relations, budget, rates and charges, business diversity and accessibility, audit, procurement, and materials management.

Ms. Borda is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Member of the American Association of Aviation Executives. She serves as Chair of the Finance Committee Steering Group for Airports Council International - North America (ACI-NA) and is a member of the American Institute of CPAs, Pennsylvania Institute of CPAs. She was named "Large Airport Finance Professional of the Year" by ACI-NA in 2022 and one of Philadelphia Business Journal's Top CFOs.

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

**Earl Heffintrayer**, VP – Senior Credit Officer, Americas Project Finance, Moody's



Earl Heffintrayer is the U.S. airport sector lead analyst and covers a diversified portfolio concentrated in transportation. In addition to Earl's work in the airport sector, he actively leads new ratings on bids in the US public private partnership market. Prior to joining Moody's in June, 2011, Earl worked at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey where he primarily analyzed alternative capital project delivery methods.

Earl began his career as a civil engineer on large infrastructure projects in the New York City region. Earl is a CFA charterholder. Earl holds a BS in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Rhode Island and an MBA from Stern School of Business at New York University.

**Damian Brooke**, *Executive VP, Finance and Procurement*, Tampa International Airport



Damian joined the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority in March 2011. He oversees the Airport's Finance, Procurement and Development Program Services functions. Prior to coming to Tampa, he served as Assistant Vice President, Market Planning and Analysis for Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. At DFW he and his team supported the airport's efforts to attract new air service and provided extensive forecasting, commercial and financial analysis throughout the organization.

He has extensive airline and consulting experience, having worked for both U.S. domestic and international flag carriers. Damian worked for American Airlines for 10 years in areas such as network planning, pricing and revenue management, international alliance planning and regulatory affairs. He lived in Doha, Qatar for two years, managing the commercial operations for Qatar Airways. In that role he oversaw the carrier's network planning and scheduling, pricing and revenue management, and commercial alliances.

He worked for eight years at the aviation consulting firm Sabre Airline Solutions. He spent four years as part of the firm's airline turnaround practice, working to restructure and optimize international airlines in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. He spent the remaining four years building the company's International Airport and Government practice from its start to management of more than 100 international clients handled by staff on four continents.

**Eric Sprys**, *Executive Vice President & CFO*, Allegheny County Airport Authority



Eric Sprys is the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of the Allegheny County Airport Authority, where he leads financial strategy and key initiatives for Pittsburgh International and Allegheny County airports. He is instrumental in helping to transform PIT into a world-class origin-and-destination gateway, partnering with airlines and regional stakeholders to support terminal development and economic impact. Eric's leadership is grounded in diverse roles, including CFO at Kadmon Pharmaceuticals and A. Stucki Company, public accountant with Ernst & Young, and early experience as a mathematics teacher. He is a licensed CPA with degrees from Penn State and Duquesne University.

**Michael Brisson**, *Director - Economic Research*, Moody's Analytics



Michael Brisson is the Director of Economic Research at Moody's Analytics. Mike provides research and analysis on the U.S. macro economy with a focus on the consumer automotive and auto finance market. Mike designed and oversees Moody's Analytics' auto residual-value forecasting solution, "AutoCycle", in both the U.S. and Australia. Prior to leading the auto-research group, Mike built CCAR, CECL, IFRS 9, and stress-testing models of consumer loan performance as a member of the Moody's Credit Analytics team. Mike regularly presents to clients and conferences, and has been featured in a number of print and televised media outlets, ranging from CNBC to The Wall Street Journal. Mike holds a PhD in applied economics from Northeastern University.

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

**Tammy Huddleston**, *Vice President of Design, Code and Construction*, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport



Tammy Huddleston provides key leadership and oversight in the management and administration of the design and construction of facilities at DFW Airport. In addition, Tammy is responsible for the issuance of building permits, enforcement of the DFW building code and supervision of the procurement of professional services and construction services.

Tammy began her career at DFW in 2000, serving as an assistant project manager in the Asset Management department. She has managed projects from the planning stages through the design, commissioning, bidding and construction phases. She advanced through the organization and prior to taking on the role as the VP of Design, Code & Construction, Tammy was the VP of Energy, Transportation and Asset Management or ETAM.

Tammy holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Texas A&M University. Her greatest strengths include the ability to create partnerships with stakeholders and contractors to achieve goals and inspire and empower employees to achieve excellence.

**Ronald Kapocius**, *Chief Financial Officer*, Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority



Ron Kapocius is the Chief Financial Officer at the Raleigh-Durham Airport. He is responsible for planning, organizing, implementing, and directing the fiscal control, business development, business management, and administrative activities of the Airport Authority. He previously served as Director of Financial Planning and Controller for the Authority, bringing over 25 years of financial leadership experience across multiple industries. Kapocius received a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Southern Illinois University in 1991. A licensed Certified Public Accountant, he is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and the North Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants.

**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.

**Rob Schultz**, *Chief Financial Officer, Spokane International Airport, Felts Field & Airport Business Park*



Mr. Schultz, Chief Financial Officer, joined the Spokane Airports in October 2021. In his role as Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Schultz oversees all accounting, audit, finance, budget, properties and contract functions for the Airport. Prior to joining the Airport, Mr. Schultz held various financial positions with the Port of Portland between 2008 and 2021. He is a Certified Member of AAAE.

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

**David (DJ) Anderson**, *Director, Airport Affairs and Properties, American Airlines*



David J. (DJ) Anderson's aviation career spans over 30 years. For the past two decades, DJ has worked for three airlines and has served in various roles, including leading teams in airport affairs, properties, facilities, procurement, and contract services. Prior to his airline roles, he served in several positions for two airport operators over a 10-year timeframe, including administration, properties, marketing, public relations, aircraft rescue firefighting, and finance. DJ is an attorney, former private pilot, and an avid railroad and aviation industry enthusiast.

**Garry Jones**, *Sr. Director Airport Affairs, Spirit Airlines*



Garry Jones brings over 40 years of aviation/airport financial, capital development, aviation program & construction management and airport affairs experience having worked for Delta Air Lines in Capital Markets and Corporate Real Estate, having led URS' Aviation Program and Construction Management Group, Gate Gourmet's Corporate Real Estate and currently responsible for a large real estate portfolio for Spirit Airlines. Garry's experience spans all aspects of aviation finance through the full life cycle of investment from use & lease negotiations, capital planning, design, construction and public market financings for small, medium and large hub.

**Julian Low**, *VP, Corporate Development, Porter*



Julian Low joined Porter Airlines in 2008. Julian served as Director, Commercial Services and Director Cost Optimization and Strategy for Porter Airlines.

Julian Low is currently Vice President Corporate Development at Porter Airlines



**Brian Mattingly**, *Director, Corporate Real Estate, Delta Air Lines*



Brian Mattingly is a Director of Corporate Real Estate at Delta Air Lines, Inc. His 25 years in airline management has been primarily focused on airport operations and airline-airport affairs. During his career, Brian has been Delta's primary airport lease representative in a host of airports such as MCO, FLL, IND, PHL, LAS, CMH, MKE, CLE, YYZ, SLC and is currently focusing on Delta's hub airports - DTW and ATL. Brian received a BA from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and an MBA from Indiana University.

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

**Lew Bleiweis**, *President & CEO, Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority*



Lew S. Bleiweis, A.A.E., is the President & CEO of the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority in Asheville, North Carolina. During his tenure, the organization has grown to a small hub airport with over two million passengers. The airport is undergoing a \$400 million terminal and FAA air traffic control tower project that will more than double the size of the terminal.

Mr. Bleiweis has over 35 years' experience in the aviation industry and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Business Administration/Airport Management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Mr. Bleiweis is a member of Airports Council International-North America having served as Chair in 2020 and 2021. Locally, Mr. Bleiweis currently serves on the Board for the Buncombe County Tourism Product Development Fund.

**Katie Gerard**, *Senior Director, Human Resources, Port of Seattle*

**Annie Russo**, *Chief Political and Congressional Strategy Officer, ACI-NA*



Annie Russo joined ACI-NA in April 2008 and currently serves as the Chief Political and Congressional Strategy Officer. She develops and leads ACI-NA's advocacy strategies on the many pressing legislative challenges facing the industry. Russo has led ACI-NA's Government and Political Affairs department since September 2015.

Prior to ACI-NA, Russo served as Legislative Director for Rep. Albio Sires (D-N.J.), directing legislative policy and handling the congressman's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Financial Services Committee assignments.

Prior to joining Rep. Sires' staff, she served as Senior Legislative Assistant to Rep. Steven Rothman (D-N.J.), assisting with his work on the Transportation Subcommittee of Appropriations and working closely with local airports on issues surrounding safety, noise reduction and airspace redesign. Russo spent her first three years on Capitol Hill working for Rep. John Olver (D-Mass.), who represents her hometown of South Deerfield, Mass.

Russo is a graduate of Smith College, with a degree in government and public policy, and also holds a master's degree in national security studies from the Naval War College.