2026 ACI-NA/AAAE AIRPORT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

All sessions and events will take place at the Signia by Hilton San Jose

Updated: April 7, 2026 // Subject to Change

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM **ACI-NA Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience Committee Steering Group Meeting**
Regency Ballroom I
Open to all ACI-NA member attendees as perimeter seating allows

The Steering Group will have a full agenda. Observers should refrain from participating in the meeting unless called upon by the committee chair.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM **CAC Canadian Communications Committee Meeting**
Regency Ballroom I
Canadian Communications Committee members only

2:30 PM – 6:30 PM **Registration**
Market Street Foyer

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM **Welcome to #AirportCX: Intro Session**
Imperial Ballroom
Come one, come all to this networking opportunity and mingle with newbies and veterans alike! Participants can expect to engage in interactive group activities, learn a few tips and tricks to enhance their Symposium experience, gain new industry contacts and have FUN. We're here for a good time, not a long time, so make your plans now to join a community of friends and discover all #AirportCX has to offer.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM **ACI-NA Customer Experience Working Group Meeting**
Regency Ballroom I
Open to all ACI-NA member attendees**.**

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM **Welcome Reception**
Fountain Restaurant
Catch up with old friends and make new connections at the welcome reception.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM **Registration**
Market Square Foyer

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM **Breakfast with Exhibitors**
Regency II

8:30 AM – 8:45 AM

Welcome Remarks
Imperial Ballroom
Gwen Basaria, Vice President, Member Experience and AAAE Foundation, AAAE

Raechel King, Senior Director, Communications and Community Affairs, ACI-NA

Manuel Pineda, Deputy City Manager, City of San José

Scott Wintner, Deputy Director of Aviation | Marketing & Communications, San José Mineta Int'l Airport

8:45 AM – 9:30 AM

Opening Keynote Address
Imperial Ballroom
Emerging technology has a powerful influence on customer expectations--and how airports can exceed them. Hear from an executive who has built successful careers on both sides of the equation: a seasoned Silicon Valley tech executive who now leads a major league sports franchise with a primary focus on creating memorable customer experiences.

Jonathan Becher, President, Sharks Sports & Entertainment

9:40 AM – 10:30 AM

We Swear We Care: A C-Suite Guide to CX
Imperial Ballroom
Let's get seriously candid about the state of the airport customer experience. Delivering exceptional CX takes more than one person, but it does start at the top. When the CEO is invested, momentum follows—but leadership alone isn't enough. Join airport leaders for a deep dive into shared and unique CX and EX challenges, actionable insights, and practical advice from the executive level.

Mookie Patel, C.M., Director of Aviation, San José Mineta International Airport

Reg Wright, President and CEO, Gander International Airport Authority

Moderated by Sandra Alvarez, Director, Passenger Experience, Ottawa International Airport Authority

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Networking Break with Exhibitors
Regency II

11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Behind the Scenes of the Ultimate Volunteer Onboarding
Imperial Ballroom
Your volunteers are ready to serve, but your onboarding process is a little underwhelming. In this session, we'll dive into the secrets of screening and training airport ambassadors to be the guardians of the terminal. It's time to ditch the 50-page PDF and replace it with impactful stories and training so engaging they'll actually want to rock the vest.

Sandip Kaur, Airport Volunteer Specialist, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

Jane Mrosko, Director of Program Services, Travelers Aid International

Moderated by Cristina Fraker, Manager, Customer Experience Volunteer Program, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport

11:50 AM – 1:15 PM

Networking Lunch & Shop 'til You Drop
Regency II
Shop 'til You Drop is an annual symposium tradition where attendees bring swag, trinkets or tchotchkes from their organizations to swap with others. Participating in Shop 'til You Drop is simple and fun, but not mandatory! During and after the luncheon, all attendees will "shop 'til you drop" around the room, collecting swag from different airports.

1:15 PM – 2:05 PM

Vibe Check: Slammin' Ideas for Peak Customer, Employee & Volunteer Experiences
Imperial Ballroom

In the #AirportCX field, we don't pat ourselves on the back nearly enough. In this collaborative, small-group session, participants will share their most successful or innovative CX, EX, or VX initiatives from 2025. The result: a crowdsourced playbook of real-world activations, ideas, and implementations—told by the pros who live and breathe the passenger experience.

Homework: Prior to landing in San Jose, please think about what you'd like to share. There are no rules—but we ask that you prepare a short one-pager or bulleted list highlighting the best thing you've created. These will be collected and shared post-Symposium. Keep it short and sweet, friends.

2:05 PM – 2:35 PM **Networking Break with Exhibitors**
Regency II

2:35 PM – 3:30 PM **We Built This CX(y): A Program Success Story**
Imperial Ballroom
No one is born with their ducks in a row. Success takes time, grit, and maybe a little elbow grease—and the same is true when building a customer experience program from the ground up. This session focuses on nailing the basics, engaging stakeholders effectively, lessons learned along the way, and creating lasting impact.

Megan O'Connell, M.S., Assistant Director, Marketing, Communications and Guest Experience, Cleveland Hopkins International Airport

Sania Duncombe, Manager of Guest Support Services, Lynden Pindling International Airport

Moderated by Barbara Yamamoto, Vice President of Business Development, PSM Squared, Inc.

3:40 PM – 4:30 PM **From Connection to Commitment: Partnering with Our Communities**
Imperial Ballroom
Community outreach and engagement have evolved significantly in recent years. While tried-and-true strategies still matter, innovation is your friend. Explore how airports can expand and enhance community partnerships beyond the usual suspects—and maybe even venture into uncharted territory.

Rachel Brannan, Program Manager, Guest & Employee Experience, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

Elisa Grey, Senior Vice President of Revenue Management, Ontario International Airport

Jonathan Small, Customer Experience Manager, Albuquerque International Sunport

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM **SJC Host Event: Throwback Arcade Party in Downtown San José**
MINIBOSS
Even in the world's capital of innovation, everything old is new again. So, grab your neon, dust off the denim and join the San José Mineta International Airport team for an evening of retro fun at MINIBOSS! This Downtown San José arcade bar will transport you back to a time when Pacman and pinball were high-tech. Drinks and heavy bites will be served, and 80's/90's attire is encouraged to match the vibe. MINIBOSS is a short walk from the Signia by Hilton – head out from the main lobby and follow the human arrows to 52 E. Santa Clara Street.

Please contact Monique Yamamoto at myamamoto@sjc.org if you require mobility assistance between the symposium hotel and host event.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026

7:30 AM – 3:00 PM **Registration**
Market Square Foyer

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM **Networking Breakfast with Exhibitors**
Regency II

9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Talk Accessibility to Me: A Deep Dive into Modern Advancements
Imperial Ballroom
In 2026, accessibility is no longer an afterthought—it's a defining standard of operational excellence. This session goes beyond baseline requirements to explore emerging trends and innovative applications that improve the passenger experience for all travelers, including those with hidden disabilities.

Sarah Cox, Manager of Accessibility, InterVISTAS Consulting

Patricia Nova, Terminal and Landside Manager, Punta Cana International Airport

Moderated by Sevda Fevzi, President & CEO, Sevly Inc

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now…When CX and EX Thrive
Imperial Ballroom
PHL WORKS is more than a brand—it's a lived experience. From its beginnings to today, hear how a shared vision came to life through the voices, passion, and commitment of employees across the airport community. This session will inspire you to reimagine what's possible when you build with people, not just for them. Learn how to turn vision into action, spark genuine engagement, and work towards a culture where both employees and customers thrive.

Leah Douglas, C.M., Director of Guest Experience, Philadelphia International Airport

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Networking Break with Exhibitors
Regency II

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Things We Need to Talk About
Imperial Ballroom
It's time to dive into the topics that make you weary. We're holding a no-fluff session to separate the signal from the noise. The good thing about being in a room with your peers, you're not alone and everyone understands.

Facilitated by:

Mia Healy-Waldron, Deputy Director of Aviation Customer Service, Boston Logan International Airport

Melissa MacDonald, Volunteer Program Coordinator, Halifax International Airport Authority

12:00 PM - 1:15 PM

Networking Lunch
Regency II

1:15 PM – 2:05 PM

Mission Possible: Developing a Robust Volunteer Program Strategy
Imperial Ballroom
Do you want your volunteer program to simply survive—or truly thrive? If you chose the latter, you can sit with us. This session dives into strategic recruitment (attracting rockstars, not ghosters), and retention tactics that actually work—then takes it one step further.

Lacyrose D. Kelly, A.C.E., Customer Experience Manager, Norfolk Airport Authority

Danni Kiefner, CTA, Ambassador Program and Customer Service Administrator, Louisville Regional Airport Authority

Jennifer Lutzko, Coordinator, Customer Relations, Saskatoon Airport Authority

Moderated by Lauren Deshpande, Volunteer Program Coordinator, San José Mineta International Airport

2:05 PM – 2:35 PM

Networking Break with Exhibitors
Regency II

2:35 PM – 3:25 PM

Constructing with Character: Preserving Sense of Place During Airport Projects
Imperial Ballroom
Repeat after us: construction is not a bad word. Development projects present real opportunities for service enhancements and elevated satisfaction scores. Learn before-, during-, and after-construction techniques to reduce chaos, manage stress, and maintain a strong sense of place amid the whirlwind of change.

Angie Dillon, Customer Experience Supervisor, Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority

Meg Rarick, Customer Experience Manager, Portland International Airport

Thyatiria Towns, Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Department of Aviation

Moderated by Jon Graves, Director of Customer Experience, San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

3:30 PM

Symposium Adjournment

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026

8:00 AM & 10:00 AM

San José Mineta International Airport Tour
San José Mineta International Airport invites you to take a ride to the west side of the airport to explore its new campus of support facilities that keep Silicon Valley's airport safe, efficient, and running smoothly. Explore SJC's fire station – among the first in the United States designed to serve both an airport and the surrounding community – as well as its new Facilities & Engineering campus and San José Police Department's brand-new air support hangar.

Tours will depart from the Signia by Hilton lobby at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. and end with drop-off at both terminals by 9:45 and 11:45 a.m., respectively. Each tour is capped at 30 participants. Tour sign-ups will close on Friday, March 27.

NOTE: Tour vehicles will not stop at the passenger terminals until the conclusion of each tour, so it's not a good option for anyone with a flight scheduled to depart before 10:45 a.m. (8 a.m. tour) or 12:45 p.m. (10 a.m. tour).