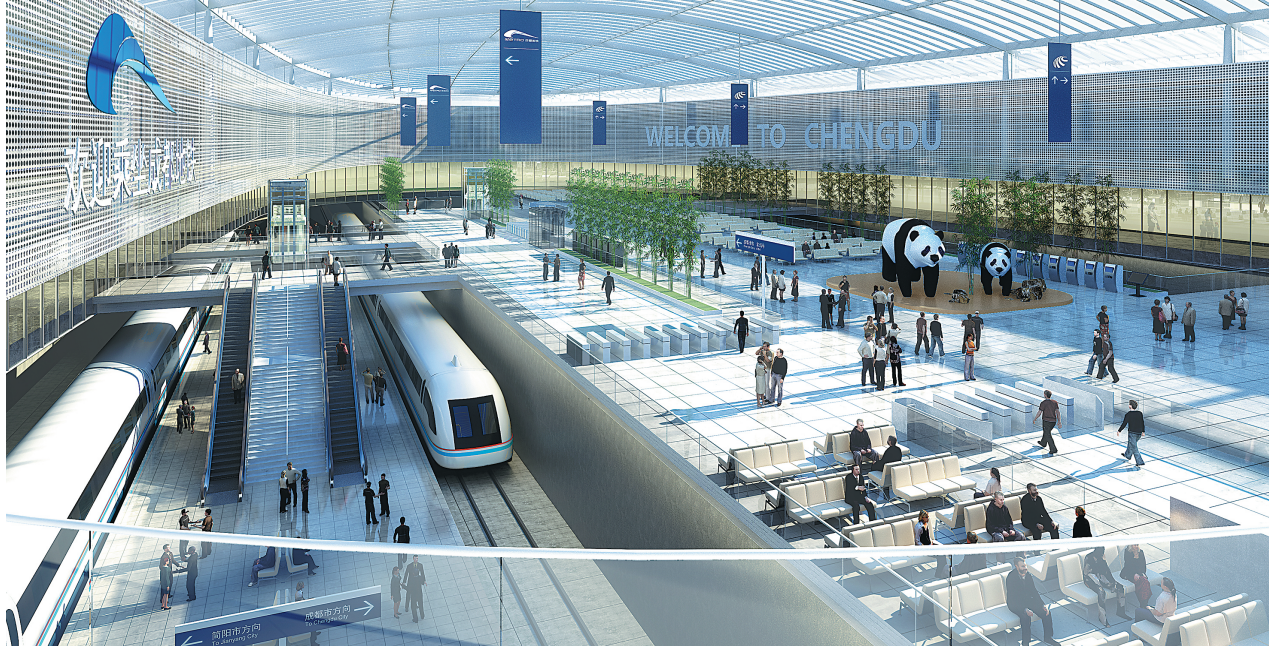


CHENGDU AIMS TO BE TRANSPORT HUB

Second civil airport will advance province's opening-up, Li Yu and Peng Chao report.



Chengdu, a mega city in western China, is building itself into a world-class aviation hub.

The city started construction of a new airport — Chengdu Tianfu International Airport — on May 27, making it the third city on the Chinese mainland to have a second civil airport.

With an investment of 71.86 billion yuan (\$11.7 billion), the Chengdu Tianfu International Airport will be located in Lujia township, 50 kilometers southeast of downtown Chengdu.

It is expected to be completed in 2019 and go into operation in 2020, said Dai Yongbo, deputy director of the Sichuan Development and Reform Commission.

“The new airport is of vital importance for Chengdu to boost opening-up and regional development,” he said.

Liu Yi, deputy chief architect of the China Southwest Architectural Design and Research Institute, which designed the new airport, said the first phase of the project would include three runways, with the capacity to handle 320,000 flights, 40 million passengers and 700,000 metric tons of cargo annually by 2025.

The long-term target for the airport is to have six runways, with annual capacity of 90 million passengers and 2 million tons of cargo.

“The Chengdu new airport, which is designed to lead the times, will feature smart services, natural and cultural landscape and green technology,” Liu said.

The airport will be highly intelligent and automatic with the use of smart technology, such as an electronic luggage tracing system, self-boarding system, intelligent baggage transport system and biometrics identification technology, Liu said.

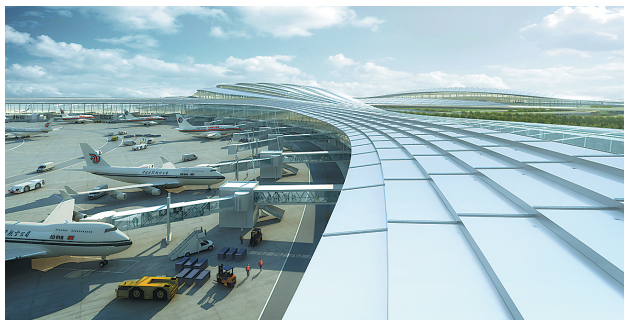
The airport will integrate the terminals with all means of transportation, including intercity railway, subway, buses, taxis and private cars. Passengers will be able to walk to any of the transportation options from the central part of the terminal within only a few minutes.

Through the intercity railway, highways and subway linked to the new airport, passengers can easily reach downtown Chengdu and its neighboring cities. The subway that will connect the new airport with downtown will travel at speeds as high as 140 km/h, so a one-way trip will only take half an hour.

Liu said the design of the new airport was inspired by traditional Shu culture. “For example, the main frames of the terminals look like four Sun Birds in the ancient mythology of the Shu State (221-263),” he said.

To give the visitors a first impression of Chengdu and its surroundings, the airport will have eight courtyards displaying representative natural and cultural landscapes of the city and Sichuan province, including Qingcheng Mountain, the Temple of Marquis, Sanxingdui Site Museum and Jiuzhaigou Valley.

“The airport will be environmentally friendly and energy-saving,” Liu said. It will make wide use of new materials and adopt such advanced technology as an intelligent energy management system, photovoltaic power generation, rainwater collection and a recycling system.



An artistic illustration of Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, which began construction on May 27, making Chengdu the third city on the Chinese mainland to have a second civilian airport. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The new airport will handle 40 million passengers annually by 2025.

22nd World Routes to be held in Sichuan capital

The 22nd World Route Development Forum, also known as “World Routes”, one of the biggest annual events for the civil aviation sector, will be held in Chengdu from Sept 24 to 27.

The event is expected to draw 3,500 representatives from 350 airlines, 1,200 airports and 200 government departments and international organizations, according to Yan Yuhua, airline marketing manager of Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport Co Ltd.

Chengdu will be the second city on the Chinese mainland to hold the event following Beijing in 2009.

A total of 92 airlines, 279 airports and 15 overseas tourist administrations had registered for the event by May 19. “A total of 90 percent of the exhibition booths have been ordered, which is much higher

than the average level of 30 percent in previous years,” Yan said.

“The event provides a platform for Chengdu to show its achievements in recent years to airlines, airports and investors around the world, and creates an excellent opportunity for Chengdu to expand its flight network,” said Jin Dazhong, deputy director of Chengdu Port and Logistics Office.

Jin said the city will hold one-on-one meetings with 36 airlines from home and abroad, pushing forward the opening of more international air routes.

He said the city is considering opening more than 20 international routes, connecting it to more cities in North America, Oceania, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

increase in its air traffic in recent years.

Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport is the fourth-busiest airport on the Chinese mainland, after Beijing Capital International Airport, Shanghai Pudong International Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport.

Chengdu Shuangliu handled 42 million passengers in 2015, an increase of 12.1 percent year-on-year, according to statistics released by Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The number of overseas passengers

“The new airport is of vital importance for Chengdu to boost opening-up and regional development.”

Dai Yongbo, deputy director of the Sichuan Development and Reform Commission

through the Shuangliu airport exceeded 4 million in 2015, and its cargo transport reached 556,600 tons, both ranked first in western China.

The Shuangliu airport is almost running at full capacity, but its passenger volume has kept rising. “Experts expect the annual aviation passenger volume in Chengdu to reach 75 million by 2025,” said Zhang Xicheng, assistant to the general manager of the Sichuan Province Airport Group.

To meet the increasing needs of air transportation and boost the city's opening up, Chengdu started the planning of a new airport in 2011. In January 2015, the central government approved the construction of the new airport.

Zhang said the new airport would serve international passenger routes and most international cargo routes, while Shuangliu airport would handle domestic flights and some international cargo routes.

Dai said Chengdu is blessed with geographical advantages as many of the air routes from China to Europe fly over the city. The new airport is expected to attract more international air routes, making Chengdu a key hub linking western China with the world.

Chengdu already has the largest number of international routes in China's central and western region. The 88 international routes connect it to cities around the world, including San Francisco, London, Paris, Moscow, Doha and Melbourne.

The city launched 10 new international flights last year alone. In February, Sichuan Airlines launched a direct route between Chengdu and Prague, the sixth direct route linking the city to Europe.

Chengdu is also planning to open direct routes to other cities including New York, Sydney, Rome and Johannesburg this year, according to the Sichuan Port and Logistics Office.

The city will open at least three international direct routes in each of the next five years, which will enable the city to become a regional hub of both international and domestic airline routes, according to an official at the Chengdu Port and Logistics Office.

“We will strengthen the city's status as a national-level aviation hub and gateway in western China, building it into an ideal transfer station that connects Europe, Africa and the Middle East to Southeast Asia, Oceania, and North America,” the official said.

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Air, rail, road networks link city to world

By LI YU and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

Backed by an advanced transportation system, the southwestern city of Chengdu is rising to become a gateway for China's westward opening-up.

The city has been expanding and optimizing its airline, railway and highway networks, making itself an international logistics hub. A key step is the construction of the Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, the city's second airport.

The airport will be the largest in the central and western region. It will mainly serve international routes, while the current airport will handle domestic flights.

The new airport will be connected to a highly advanced land transportation system, including highways, subways and high-speed rail, which will allow for the easy transfer of passengers and cargo to destinations around Chengdu and its neighboring cities.

“The new airport is of vital importance for the development of the Sichuan province and the western region. It will strengthen Chengdu's advantages as western China's transportation hub, and add wings to the economic development of the city,” said Deng Ling, a professor of economics at Sichuan University.

Deng said the new airport will also boost the opening up of Chengdu and Sichuan province, and help to promote the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Sheng Yi, deputy director of the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, said the new airport would help the city to attract talent and resources, enhance international exchanges and boost industry development.

Located at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Yangtze River Economic Belt, Chengdu has been drawing attention from global investors and partners.

By the end of last year, Chengdu had direct economic and trade relations with 223 major cities worldwide including 20 that have opened trade and tourism offices in the city. The city is also home to 271 Fortune Top 500 companies.

Fifteen foreign countries have set up consulates in Chengdu, the largest number in western China. By the end of March, the city had 29 sister cities and 40 friendly partner cities.

Land transportation

Chengdu is upgrading its land transportation system. Railway lines starting from Chengdu not only connect it to cities all over China, but also to Central Asia and Europe.

The Chengdu-Europe Express Rail that started operation in April 2013 departs from the Chengdu International

Railway Port and terminates in Lodz, Poland. It transports laptops, iPads, auto parts and home appliances to Europe, and brings back mechanical and electrical products, food and beverages.

On March 25, a train carrying 20,000 semi-finished color TVs from TCL's Chengdu subsidiary headed to Europe on the express rail track. The TVs were to be finished in Poland and sold in European countries.

Since January 2015, TCL has transported 468 tons of cargo worth 53.72 million yuan (\$8.28 million) via express rail, according to Chengdu customs.

“We sent our products by sea in the past, which took 27 days,” said Liu Guifang, project director of TCL's operations center. “The express rail saves us plenty of time as it cuts the transport time to around 10 days.”

Liu said the express rail provides a more convenient channel for her company to do business with its European clients. The company plans to export TVs via express rail every week.



Artistic rendering of the new airport in Chengdu.

The city is playing an important role as a transportation hub, as it puts forward the idea of “Chengdu-Europe Plus”, referring to the railway being connected to more domestic and European cities.

The railway is expanding to Chinese cities including Shanghai, Shenzhen, Xi'an and Kunming, while in Europe, it will expand to cities including Nuremberg, Hamburg and Tilburg, according to the Chengdu Port and Logistics Office.

Chengdu also opened the Chengdu-Central Asia Express Rail in July 2014, connecting it to Central Asian countries within nine to 11 days.

According to the city's planning, by 2020 the railway network will make it possible to travel between Chengdu and nearby Chongqing within one hour; to major cities such as Xi'an, Kunming, Guiyang and Wuhan within four hours; and to the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and Bohai Rim area within eight hours.

The highway network will shorten the driving time from Chengdu to Chongqing to within three hours; to Xi'an, Kunming, Guiyang and Wuhan to within eight hours; and to the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and the Bohai Rim area to within 20 hours.



An illustration of a bird's eye view of the new airport in Chengdu.