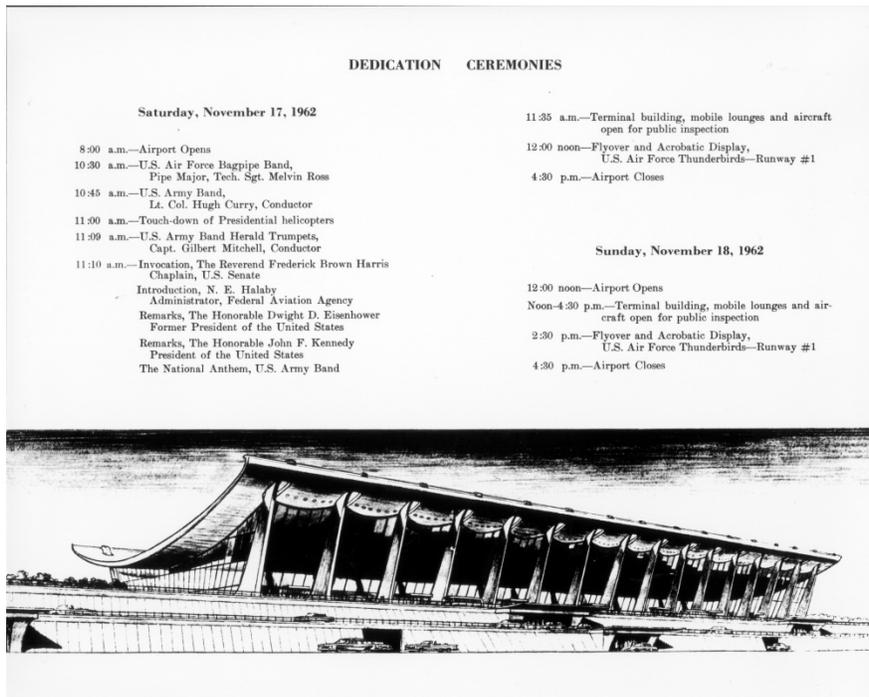


FAA's "White Elephant"

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On November 17, 1962, ceremonies marked the opening of FAA's Dulles International Airport (renamed Washington Dulles International Airport in 1984). President John F. Kennedy officially dedicated the airport, named for the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, with former President Dwight D. Eisenhower in attendance. Other dignitaries celebrating the opening included FAA Administrator Najeeb Halaby, Mrs. John Foster Dulles, and former CIA Director Alan Dulles, brother of John Foster Dulles.



The second airport owned and operated by the FAA, Dulles was the first U.S. airport specifically designed to handle jet aircraft. The opening ceremonies came after 12 long years of planning, controversy, and construction. With capacity at its limit at Washington National Airport after World War II, the CAA, Congress, and the White House began contemplating construction of a second airport to serve the region. President Truman signed Public Law 762 on September 7, 1950, which directed the Secretary of Commerce (to whom the CAA reported) "to construct, protect, operate, improve, and maintain" a second public airport for the Washington, DC, area. The act authorized appropriations not to exceed \$14 million, and Congress subsequently authorized \$1 million to launch the project.

After considering several sites in Maryland and Virginia, the CAA decided to locate the new airport in Burke, VA. By the end of 1951, 1,046 of the required 4,570 acres had been purchased

at the Burke location. When local opposition to the project developed, however, Congress refused to appropriate additional funds.

From 1953-1955, CAA conducted a number of studies to determine the best alternative to the Burke site. In December 1955, following Senate hearings in July, the CAA reiterated its earlier position that the Maryland site occupied by Andrews Air Force Base would be the best location, but again recommended Burke as the next best alternative. Congress turned down a request for \$34.7 million to complete the Burke project when strong opposition to that site continued at Senate hearings in July 1956.

The following year, in August 1957, Congress appropriated \$12.5 million for a second airport for Washington, DC, to be built on a site to be recommended by President Eisenhower. The President charged his special assistant for aviation, General Elwood "Pete" Quesada with site selection. In a report to Congress on January 16, 1958, President Eisenhower endorsed Quesada's recommendation to build the airport at Chantilly, VA. Many local residents and many in the aviation community disagreed with the decision. They called the new airport a "white elephant," claiming it a waste of tax payer money because no one would use the airport since it was so far from Washington, DC.

Land acquisition began on January 27, 1958, after condemnation proceedings by the Department of Justice. With land acquisition and projected construction costs rising, on July 11, 1958, Congress removed the ceiling of \$14 million for construction. On August 1, the U.S. Government took official possession of the original 8,200-acre Washington international airport site at Chantilly. Construction on what was eventually to become Dulles International Airport began the following month, on September 2.

To clear the airport land, construction workers tore down 580 buildings, including 300 homes, closed 15 miles of secondary roads, excavated 12 million cubic yards of earth, and built the world's largest concrete plant on site. The plant ultimately used more than 250,000 tons of sand, 600,000 tons of crushed stone, and 750,000 barrels of cement. By the end of construction, workers poured approximately 1.2 million cubic yards of Portland cement, not counting an estimated half-million square yards of asphaltic concrete for the runway shoulders.



Terminal under construction



CAA's successor organization, FAA contracted with renowned architect Eero Saarinen to design the terminal building. The design was radically different from contemporary terminals. By eliminating the "fingers" or spokes that spread out from other terminals to accommodate arriving and departing aircraft, Saarinen designed the Dulles terminal as a sleek, two-story building, 600 feet long and 150 feet wide.

Saarinen referred to the terminal as "the best thing I have done." His design won one of three "first honors" awards for architectural

excellence presented by the American Institute of Architects in 1966. The awards jury cited the terminal for conveying the "free and graceful movement that we associate with flight," and stated that the entire project set "a new high in architectural achievement by the Federal Government." In May 1978, the terminal was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

With no "finger" ramp areas, FAA contracted for a fleet of mobile lounges to carry passengers from the terminal to their departing planes or from arriving planes to the terminal. The mobile lounges, designed and built by the Chrysler Corporation Defense Operations Division and the Budd Company, were the largest passenger carrying vehicles ever built to be operated on rubber tires. At 54 feet long, 17 ½ feet high, and 16 feet wide, they compared in size to 8 intercity buses arranged with two side by side, two more parked to the rear of those, and four more stacked on top of each of the first four.



President John F. Kennedy, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and FAA Administrator Najeeb Halaby at the dedication ceremony

The new airport opened for training and familiarization flights on October 1, 1962. After the formal dedication ceremony on November 17, it opened for commercial traffic on November 19. The first airlines to fly into Dulles on that day were Braniff, Delta, Eastern, Northwest, and TWA.

Dulles' original identifier was DIA. Because of passenger confusion between Dulles and the Dallas airport, including a number of people ending up at the wrong destination, FAA changed the identifier to IAD on May 22, 1968.