The Hold Room, Season 2 Episode 19 – Carrie Shaeffer, Chris Spaulding, and Asia Johnson

Transcript

[Introduction]

TJ: Welcome to The Hold Room with ACC: a quick update on all things relating to airport development as well as the Airport Consultants Council.

Laura Canham: This episode is part of the passenger experience headers hosted by ACC's Terminal and Facilities Committee in this series. We are collecting the experiences and perspectives about the future of passenger travel, including changing demographics such as the U.S. population, aging and becoming more multicultural, new technologies, labor, and supply chain. Shortages and what the future may have in store. Thank you for joining us in the Hold Room.

[Interview]

Carrie Wojcik: Well, thank you everyone for joining us again in the Hold Room. I'm Carrie,

Mike Ambrosio: Hi, I'm Mike.

Carrie W: And we are joined by different individuals from ACC who will be involved with hosting the plenary sessions. So, I have Carrie Shaeffer from Swinnerton, Chris Spaulding from Jacobson Daniels as well as Asia Johnson from Jacobsen Daniel. So, thank you so much for joining us today. If each of you could just quickly say your name, your role, and introduce yourself so our listeners know who you are.

Carrie Shaeffer: Yeah, hi. Thanks for having us. I'm Carrie Shaeffer with Swinnerton and I am chairing the planning committee for the upcoming Symposium. Super excited to be with you all today.

Chris Spaulding: My name is Chris Spaulding as Carrie mentioned. Thank you for having me as well. I serve as the vice chair for the Symposium Planning Committee and work as a senior consultant for Jacobsen Daniels based in Chicago. Go Cubs.

Asia Johnson: I'm Asia, I'm with Jacobsen Daniels and I am supporting Chris in his role as Vice chair, and so I'm the vice chair YP.

Carrie W: Awesome. Thanks everyone.

Mike: If you don't mind. Could you kind of tell us a little bit more about what your sessions are about and what you're excited about them?

Carrie S: Yeah, I'd be glad to start with that. Thanks, Mike. This is Carrie Shaeffer again. So, as the kind of the chair and vice chair, one of the biggest roles and exciting roles of helping the planning committee bring the Symposium together is that we had a bringing together the plenary sessions for day one and day two. So, the one that I am pulling together right now, it's pretty cool. It was inspired by one of the submissions of the 230 submissions we got for topics for the upcoming Symposium and we are looking at some applications of the for the Paris Olympics and then looking forward visioning for the LAX Olympics at 2028. We're to hear from both of those planning groups on some emerging technologies

that they are using and for managing the incredibly complex logistics of all of those people: Athletes, judges here and people coming to watch and VIP's and just multiple airports in the area and then multiple venues. So, I'm really excited to hear from both of those and compare and contrast what the, what they're thinking about, how they going to solve those big puzzles.

Mike: Yeah, very interesting. You know, it's something that you don't necessarily think about and think of the Olympics and it's just cool to see how our industry is starting to tackle those challenges.

Carrie S: Absolutely. It was inspired by the group that is, they're going to do certain pilot program of using VTOL in the Paris area to solve some of their logistics issues, so I'm looking forward to it.

Chris: Yeah, being part of the LAX land program, a lot of that was a part of preparing for the Olympics. So right now, you know, having that underway with the APM fully developed and operational, what are the next steps are they, are they going to take from like a technology standpoint. So, this will be a very synergetic conversation to see different viewpoints on how the attack this problem and look at opportunities to invest in aviation for these world events. Yeah. And so we have another plenary session and I think on a similar plane we want to drive in the topic of innovation into the program, especially on the big stage. And so, one of the topics was the topic of AI and I think that's something we are all talking about outside of aviation as well. Been around us for maybe the last five years, but I think particularly we've seen the ball rolling a lot. I'll plug for the innovation tracks session. They're going to be focusing on a topic of AI and how it's gonna impact design and construction and how we perform and deliver a product or help plan airports, you know, for our clients. So, for the plenary, we wanted to take it to another level and focus on the high encompassing view of AI. And it's exciting to think about, like, how it's going to impact operations at airports, particularly for passenger experience. So how is AI going to impact the passenger when they leave their house all the way to when they go through the check-in process and get to the gate though a lot of us are hearing conversations about it at other events and I think Symposium we want to bring it to the table at a kind of a one-on-one perspective because a lot of us still need to learn what is going to happen, what are the policies that are going to be shaped to help make this a feasible tool for all of us to use at the airports. How is that going to be implemented in biometrics and whatnot? So, looking at it from the policy standpoint, rule making, but also from the operations perspective and want to be able to bring a consultant on board as well to talk about what the future might look like with that. Because I think at the end of the day, it's going to be inevitable. Kind of like the advent of the Internet. People are always a little skeptical about new technologies, and I think the symposium is always a great forum to continue talking about it and build on top of what can we do to make sure we're staying on top of the trends that are going on right now.

Carrie S: I agree Chris. It can be such a broad topic and also such a molecular level topic that I'm looking forward to what you all are going to hone in on and, like you said, for the passenger experience and really affects our industry. And then I also appreciate how the bigger plenary session is going to feed into some very specific, even more technical sessions in the tracks.

Chris: Yeah, I would say that is our theme this year there. There's always kind of a central theme at the Symposium every year. You know some years we focus a little bit more on diversity and inclusion and we certainly do have some sessions that touch on that topic. But also you know sustainability and how are we going green at airports. But I've seen technology and innovation to rise to the top. In fact, this year is the first year we have our own standalone innovation track. We used to have mini tracks in the past symposiums, so I think that's going to be something we'll see continue moving forward because

that is such a large component of what we discuss and. What we like to collaborate about at this conference with each other. So that's an exciting change for the Symposium program for 2024 event.

But overall I, I'd say, you know, attendees come to this conference for the technical program. So I like going to this event just because you get to meet such a vast array of diverse people. Within aviation, consulting from architects to planners to construction managers, and you get to pick your own journey with these concurrent sessions, but also network with people who just have such a different take on what they do in the industry, which I find always really fascinating about why I chose to get an aviation right because there's so much more to aviation than just being an airport operations or being a pilot, even though those are really great careers. You know, consulting is such a great way to really innovate and change within those environments. It's also one of those events that's really fun almost to the point where like, it's exhausting [laughter]. Always something going on. You know it's a three-day event, but ACC and AAAE do such a great job of enabling companies to put together receptions and host things outside of the program as well. So this upcoming years event is located in Salt Lake City.

Carrie W: A lot of nice views, right?

Chris: A lot of great mountains, yeah.

Mike: Close to skiing before and after.

Carrie W: And probably a very new airport terminal. Yeah. Salt Lake City had a lot of work done.

Carrie S: Yes, they've been turning over pieces in the last couple of years. It's a great airport. So, I'm I'm sure that Salt Lake City is really proud to be hosting and to have all of us all those many points of view that Chris was talking about from our industry coming straight into their airport kind of get inspiration to kick.

Carrie W: So of our group, you're representing the YP's, so I'm curious from your perspective as a young professional, what are you excited for these sessions and what are you looking to learn as well?

Asia: The session in particularly the one I've been helping with Chris, develop the AI session. Because AI is such a hot topic right now and it. So vast as well, I'm just looking forward to us developing it. The topic in a way that encompasses everyone's interest. I know like that's the whole point of the plenary as well, but just in a way that, you know, we all have this buzz, this, you know, the buzz of AI in the back of our heads right now, just with how involved we all are with technology. You know, even the smallest person who does who's not a technology person is still a technology person in 2023, so I'm looking forward to that part of it and just generally learning how we put these different sessions together and what goes into the planning of that and how many pieces it really is versus attending the Symposium this year for the first time and just going into the session. Experiencing it is so different to seeing all of what went into planning that session this year, so I've enjoyed that part of it so far. And yeah, I look forward to continuing to develop our session and really get every we'll continue to have everyone be excited about AI as it relates to aviation.

Carrie W: That's great. And you said this is your first year attending Symposium?

Asia: This will be my second year, but my first year involved I kind of had a unique perspective this year for Anaheim because I know Chris and because I know Christian who supported Chris this year. So, I kind of had like a little peek into how things would go and it was only my second conference I had attended

as well, so I look forward to attending in a different capacity this year and from a place of understanding and knowing what's going on and how things are operating, while it's still enjoying a lot of the sessions and things that are happening as well.

Chris: We've been really lucky to have you, Asia.

Asia: Thanks. I've been happy to support both of you guys. We'll end the whole the whole Ex. Com., the whole team for sure.

Carrie S: Asia just had a great perspective and I think it's fun to sit here and listen to because I forget that it's a different point of view for you, but you're really for the very first time, seeing how much effort it takes and how much passion there is from the planning committee and why we're so happy to do it and create as high quality of a Symposium as we can. If anybody peeked behind the door and attended one of our meetings, which always run over because everybody's always so excited and passionate with all these great ideas, it is a very rewarding effort.

Chris: The meetings I look forward to every week, Carrie, to see all of your faces.

Asia: For sure. And I think everyone will be able to feel the passion and with that, everyone has towards this symposium as attendees and I think we're all going to be excited as members of the Ex. Com. and track hosts and stuff like that to be there and represent. But I think that the spirit is really like it just fills you up, it's and it's really enjoyable for sure.

Carrie S: Preparing myself for about 3 days with no sleep, just run on a drink. This event preparing myself for. The difference between being a track host and then chairing a committee and just feeling really responsible and accountable, but also so thankful for all the planning committee and really everybody who's creating sessions, it's hard to it's hard to comprehend until you get behind the scenes of how many people put so many hours over the months and months Into into the program.

Chris: Yeah, it is. It is a testament to everyone who serves as a track host every year how much time that and effort they put into it. And even this year, there's been some, some really great topics that we've been able to select and then some challenges here and there because perhaps people aren't available or something. So, there's always things that we save to sort of tackle as a as a committee, but nothing we can't do together. And that's why since I have been a part of the planning committee back in 2017. We've always pushed forward with this track host management style, I would say, but I think only for the past five years or so, AC has been trying to push more involvement from the young professional side. So having track hosts, have a Co-trackhost as well and give exposure and experience to young professionals. And trust me when I say everyone, especially the YP's, have been putting in so much effort. I would say they would be put, they are putting more effort.

Carrie S: It's great to have their input. Yes, it's doing some of the organizational work. It's just as much about setting the vision and direction for each of the tracks and the sessions to have that young professional point of. View in there.

Mike: I guess we can roll on to the next question. What is your previous experience at this Symposium been like and what's the one thing that keeps you coming back year after year that you keep looking forward to and are excited for as it gets closer and closer?

Carrie S: Sure, well so, I have attended the planning, design, and construction Symposium several times. Probably 5 or 6 times. A couple of years ago I and always, you know, my company has exhibited it. So, we have spent a lot of time in exhibit hall, but also had time to go lots of sessions and certainly enjoying hospitality events with our clients and our partners. So, it's a really multifaceted week. A couple of years ago I was the project management, construction management, track host. So that gave me a taste like Asia's talking about today that gave me. Like, oh wow, look at all the people whose shoulders were standing on that came before us and did all this work to make all those other Symposiums great. So that was really very rewarding. I also enjoyed working side by side with that my YP young professional. That was helping me as a track host. Lacey, we've continued our partnership very closely ever since then. In our careers, so the symposium for me. As I said in multifaceted, I absolutely love connecting with all of my work friends and hearing what's going on with them. One of my best practices is I always when I go to a conference, I have carefully and specifically identified two or three people that I don't know that I want to know. And the Symposium is the perfect place to use your existing network to connect with those new connections of people. So that's one very rewarding thing I get out of it and then you just always, you always, always learn something and have some fun along the way.

Asia: Yeah, this year in Anaheim was my first Symposium and I had a great time personally followed the terminal landside track fairly closely through the sessions. If there were questions, but even after like that ability to go up to them, speak to them and just start a conversation. And as well as the network and trying to connect with people that I never met before. So, I kind of went on LinkedIn beforehand, find found a few people that I wanted to meet throughout this Symposium and did that as well as people that were on a different panel or something that I may have met or have been mentioned to me before that I wanted to meet and connect them with people that I've met at prior conferences as well. I had only been to one conference before this one, so it was really cool to see really. I hear all the time how niche the aviation community is, so to see it and make those connections to people that I met six months or a year ago was really the cool too. And then the scavenger hunt and the YP involvement. I thoroughly enjoyed that part of it. I think it was a great way for all of us to get out of our nerves and just find something else to focus on while enjoying these very technical sessions and forcing yourself to just be a little more social than normal. And having to take pictures with people you don't really know and doing all that kind of stuff. But you know, in doing that you're still meeting some really valuable people who are the targets of the scavenger hunt. So, for my first experience, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I was able to meet people like Sylvia who invited who said, you know, I would be a fit for something like this for the next Symposium. So to see it come full circle and support this time around has been really good, so I really enjoyed my first experience and I'm hoping to enjoy it again. Well, I know I'll enjoy it again in, in March in a different capacity, but yeah, I thoroughly enjoyed my first experience.

Chris: When I first went to the Symposium. And being part of the Young Professionals program that's still alive and growing today, it really just forces you as a YP who's sort of like new to a lot of the folks that are there to network and to ask names and to do really silly things to take photos like as you was talking about. Not sure if they're gonna do this scavenger hunt again this year. But it's it is a nice way to bring your YP's who are part of your team, to not only just network, but you know, build their accreditation hours. I think that's a really big component as to why people do attend this technical conference is to fulfill their hours, whether you're like an architect or planner or an engineer. That's this is sort of the technical conference to go to. To start off, I used to work at ACC. I was a communications manager outside right out of college. I mean, I really got my feet wet into the Symposium pretty much

right away. So, I was going to the Symposium when they were there was about 600 attendees and now we're shooting to have a goal of about 1,500 in Salt Lake City, so it's grown significantly and it's been amazing to see the evolution of where it was then and your war stories about what the Symposium was like even before my time, not war stories. But you know what I mean? Yeah. I think after I left ACC and was a part of Jacobsen Daniels, I was still very involved with program planning and I've been a part of the Program Planning Committee as similar to what Asia is doing as the planning track host, Young Professional. I've also been the program manager for the last couple of years, so. Coming on board this year's Vice chair is kind of a really nice and refreshing perspective and great working with Carrie. I will say she's just been so lovely to work with. I'm really just excited about the new content. Carrie, I'm surprised you didn't mention your slogan for the 2024 event, but this, you know, I'll make it a little pitch right now. This event is gonna be robust, relevant, and forward thinking. I mean, every year we always walk away feeling like we learned something. And really try to make it that is welcoming to everyone. And so I think that is part of one of ACC strategic pillars is to promote DEI in everything that we do as ACC ambassadors. I mean essentially that's what we're doing. You can see it in the program now. We have a lot of airport participation. I would say this is probably the most amount of airports. You're seeing in the program. Heavy FAA participation. FAA knows this is one of their events that they need to attend because it is a great platform for them to share their new updates and like advisory circulars or new policies that are going to be forthcoming. So, it's just a lot of excitement that comes around the conversations and so that's something I always look forward to every year. And we'll continue to. I would say my favorite Symposium just from like a city perspective was New Orleans. I don't remember what year it was. I think it was 2017. And I always tell people this it was the week after the big Mardi Gras weekend and then it was also sandwiched in between when the Saints were going to host the Super Bowl. So, I mean that city was busted. And you had parades and it was just so much fun and everyone was just having a good time because that's what we're there to rekindle relationships and to meet new people and really expand your network. Because at the end of the day, it's not even just about our clients. It's also about our partnerships and bringing people together to make it feel like it is an inclusive community. And so that's how I like to look at this Symposium, especially as it continues to evolve.

Carrie W: Thank you, Chris. That was great and I love some of the things that you touched on just how important it is to send different representatives from your company for learning credentials. It is a lot of fun and networking and you can run into Mardi Gras and a Super Bowl possibly. But at the end of the day, yeah, there's just so much educational programming, doesn't matter where you are in your career.

Carrie S: So many different things going on this year and I wanted to emphasize what Chris said, that we've got a tremendous amount of airports coming to share their own experiences from all different geographic locations and also all different sizes of airports. They're getting the small airport as well as the very, very large airport perspective. Also a lot more TSA input and even some universities are bringing their input this year. Some data-driven tools. Things like that.

Carrie W: I do think that that's an important thing to state how like there are airport professionals, people who actually work for these different airports that are on some of these panels, they're in some of these sessions or they're attending themselves to get credentials. So, I think that's an important thing to mention that there's going to be all this knowledge in one city, that's a great addition.

Carrie S: Maybe we didn't get a chance to touch on the absolute diversity of the program. This Symposium is hosted by AAAE and ACC. As a really active ACC member, I'm super excited to look at the variety of topics that we're gonna cover. There are, as always, but they're emerging practices that are going to help airports and there's their consultants in terms of getting the most out of the current funding that's out there. There are many, many different sessions that touch on making sure that you're maximizing getting what your airport needs and improving your passenger experience. There's so many things touching on emerging technologies. Not just the passenger experience, but the staff and the crews make their experience in their life more reliable, say, for all of those things, especially just again on those emerging technologies like there are two different sessions that are going to touch on the use of mass timber in airports. And that's just one particular thing that I think is super cool. Sometimes our brains. Don't put those two things together, but airports are a great place for such a warm material, and two different groups are bringing different topics about that. But that's just a little the things I'm excited about amongst others.

Carrie W: Well, thank you for sharing that and I read something recently about mass timber being used in all sorts of applications and I was like: what is this? New trend. So that's well that they're going to be talking about it. Thank you so much to all of you for joining us in the whole room today. We hope that our listeners register for Symposium and get to experience some of this themselves. Thank you everyone.

Carrie S: Thank you.

Chris: Thank you so much for having us. Looking forward to seeing everyone in in March.

[Outro]

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