

Port Columbus adding hundreds of outlets to give travelers a charge

Business First by Adrian Burns, Staff reporter

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Port Columbus International Airport plans should be done installing 650 additional outlets and another 650 USB charging stations on gate seats by early February.

The days of desperately searching for an outlet and sitting on the floor to plug in at Port Columbus International Airport are coming to an end.

The airport has been adding electrical outlets and USB charging docks by the score in the past couple years, and is ramping up that effort in coming weeks. By early February, officials plan to have completed the installation of 650 additional outlets and another 650 USB charging stations on gate seats, said David Whitaker, vice president of business development for the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, which oversees Port Columbus.

But that's not all that's happening on the connectivity front. The airport is also adding traveler workstations in its concourses where 40 more new outlets will be installed.

Other improvements include adding 30 power mats in gate areas where devices can be charged by simply setting them down, Whitaker said.

All this work is coming after a significant Wi-Fi speed upgrade that came in 2011, when the airport installed a 20 megabyte per second capacity Wi-Fi system dedicated to public use. In the past, the Wi-Fi capacity at the airport was limited to 8 megabytes, Whitaker said.

So why is the airport making this announcement now? In part because on my Twitter feed. I publicized a study about how the average airport gate in the U.S. has just 5.5 outlets. I got a tweet back from the Port Columbus account letting me know that the airport was adding a ton of new outlets to obliterate that average – it'll have nearly 2,400 places to plug in when it's all said and done.

That study named some of the airports with the fastest Wi-Fi connections, which I mentioned in the tweet (noting that Columbus wasn't listed). The airport's tweet back pointed out that with its new system, it's now offering Wi-Fi speeds that are faster than those available at many airports.