

**Rotary**  
Club of  
Charlotte



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 8, 2022

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## Ben Goebel: A New and Improved CLT

**By Suzanne Bledsoe**

Ben Goebel has been involved in the design and project management of complex airports and related structures for 15 plus years. He moved to Charlotte in 2019 to undertake and oversee a \$500 million project at Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) that will result in the addition of 175,000 square feet and renovation of another 191,000 square feet.

Not only is CLT one of the fastest growing airports in the United States, it is also one of the top 10 busiest airports. More than 500 million passengers pass through its gates, on the way to 178 (and counting) destinations. Over the past 13 years, CLT has grown by 65%; the success of our hometown airport has significant impacts on the aviation industry nationwide.

Ben, a principal at Gresham Smith, shared with us pictures, commentary and design philosophy as it relates to the particulars of the project in various areas of the main Terminal. The foundation of the project is based on the premise of building structures and providing amenities that are in keeping with the warm and welcoming southern hospitality that Charlotte is known for. The spaces are bright and airy with colors that denote important aspects of our culture in Charlotte—various shades of blue for our many sports teams, both collegiate and professional, bright yellows for our agricultural roots, mock raceways for our NASCAR heritage. The entrance to the terminal will be bright, open and full of comfortable seating and waiting areas. Curbside areas will be fully covered, for protection in all types of weather, yet open and airy such that sunny blue skies remain visible. The number of security checkpoints will be less, but the newer ones are more streamlined and equipped with state-of-the-art technology, allowing

passengers to pass through at quicker rates. The baggage claim area will be open and bright, designed to be welcoming with natural light, high ceilings and cheerful patterns and colors. While signage will be everywhere it needs to be, the flow and patterns of passenger movement will be more intuitive, all designed to reduce stress levels and enhance the travel experience.

The amenities—artwork, murals, information boards, restrooms and concessions—will be upgraded, in keeping with and enhancing the “Welcome to Charlotte” theme.

It is interesting to note that much of what is incorporated in the details of this project is obtained from data analytics that take into account flight patterns, the peaks and troughs of passenger traffic as well as the measurement of passenger comfort, confusion, and behaviors.

This project is expected to be completed sometime mid-2025. It is just one component of a multitude of other upgrades and expansion as it relates to the “air side”, primarily the concourses.

Many of us have not experienced air travel recently, and some of us may be reluctant to jump back in. But I bet we all are curious to see (and enjoy) the new and improved CLT!

\*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/675233939>  
The program introduction begins at 19:20 minutes.