



Mineta San José International Airport Innovates Customer Experience with Autonomous Wheelchair Trial

Airport Leans into Technology for Passengers Wanting Mobility Assistance

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This weekend, travelers at [Mineta San José International Airport \(SJC\)](#) can choose a new, tech-forward option for arriving at their boarding gates. Beginning Friday, March 11th, through the 14th, the Airport is testing the use of no-fee, walk-up, autonomous power chairs made by mobility device developer, [WHILL](#), a Tokyo-based company with its US headquarters in the Bay Area.

The autonomous power chairs are free and easy to use: Passengers simply select a destination on a screen and the device independently navigates through the terminal to their gate, then automatically drives itself back to its base at the Security Checkpoint. For safety, the device is equipped with an automatic collision avoidance system.

No strangers to innovation, SJC welcomes the 4-day pilot in response to customer interest in

this concept, though it would not replace existing wheelchair services that require staff escorting provided by airlines. The WHILL devices are intended to supplement existing wheelchair service, aimed at passengers who might want assistance reaching gates located further distances from the Security Checkpoint, but do not reserve a wheelchair.

SJC Airport Director John Aitken said, “We understand that our customers are the heart of our operation, and as Silicon Valley’s airport, we welcome innovation. Pilots like this help us continue to strive to stay ahead of our customers’ needs.”

“Our device not only increases the mobility of customers looking to travel,” **said WHILL’s Director of Business Development for North America Shannon Fain**, “but also increases their independence and overall experience, while at the same time improving airport operations and efficiency.”



Using the power chairs is easy. To see the devices and how they work, [CLICK HERE](#) for a brief informational video.

WHILL has successfully implemented the autonomous devices at [Haneda International Airport](#) (HNA) in Tokyo, Japan, and has had trials domestically at the Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Atlanta, New York/JFK, and Grand Rapids airports.

SJC is the first West Coast airport to introduce this innovation.



SJC: Transforming How Silicon Valley Travels

Mineta San José International Airport (SJC) is Silicon Valley's airport, a self- supporting enterprise owned and operated by the City of San Jose. The airport, now in its 73rd year, provides nonstop service across North America and to Europe and Asia. For more airport information, visit <https://www.flysanjose.com>.

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