



LOW-FLOOR AIRPORT BUSES ARE AN ESSENTIAL GROUND HANDLING TOOL AT TODAY'S AIRPORTS



“TX 452, this is ground control. Please remain at present location as your requested gate position is still blocked.” This instruction is given to pilots every day at almost every airport. The reason is the booming aviation business that has recently seen an annual 25 percent increase in flights in certain regions. Airlines always want to reduce ground times to the absolute minimum, resulting in the requirement for airports to increase terminal capacity to unanticipated levels in impossibly short times. But any terminal expansion will take at least five years from initial planning to the beginning of operations, and geographical restrictions might prevent any expansion at all.

The only way to gain immediate additional handling capacity – and which can also be a long-term solution for a modern airport operation – is to introduce remote parking positions. Aircraft can be parked at any available open space at the airport and immediately provide additional capac-

ity. Ground-handling needs can be provided by mobile equipment. There is, however, always the logistical challenge for a comfortable, safe and economical way of getting passengers from the aircraft to the terminal and vice versa.

Airports in Europe and innovative vehicle manufacturers developed low-floor airport buses and successfully implemented them into the airport environment as early as the mid-1970s. For decades the advantage of using low-floor airport buses has been a part of all airport operations in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia. Most North American airports have considered this operation only rather recently, with the increase in aviation activity after the recovery from 9/11.

But why would an airline, airport and ground handler go for a special low-floor airport bus instead of ordinary city buses for such an operation? The answer is simple: the airport bus offers the advantage of a full low-floor area, so there is only one

Overcoming the logistical challenge of transporting passengers to and from remote parking positions



It is a fact that such remote aircraft parking operations will be more cost effective for at least 10 to 12 years compared with the construction of a terminal expansion with boarding bridges



- 1. Airport buses have a full low-floor area, so there is only one step up from the ground
- 2. Low-floor airport buses, equipped with the latest screening technology, can be used as mobile security gates

step from the ground into the bus. The step height can even be reduced by a kneeling system. There is no further step or incline within the passenger area, thus providing maximum safety as well as fast movement of passengers within the bus. Extra-wide doors at the entrances and exits enable two passengers to move through at the same time. Doors on both sides of the bus provide maximum flexibility when approaching the aircraft. There is also a huge advantage at the terminal and at congested apron areas.

Special drive-train concepts reduce fuel consumption and pollution to an unbeatable minimum. In addition to these factors, remote parking positions and hard stands reduce airport development costs tremendously. It is a fact that such remote aircraft parking operations will be more cost effective for at least 10 to 12 years compared with the construction of a terminal expansion with boarding bridges.

There are many other applications at airports for these buses. For inter-terminal and midfield terminal transport, they offer a cost-effective alternative to people movers, which have a lengthy construction time. Low-floor airport buses, equipped with the latest screening technology, can even be used as mobile security gates for random checks of passengers and personnel at any location in the airport area.

In addition they are an ideal transport method for car park shuttle services in airport environments. There really are almost unlimited possibilities for improving airport operations using low-floor airport buses.

1 Andreas Funk is director, sales and marketing, at Contrac