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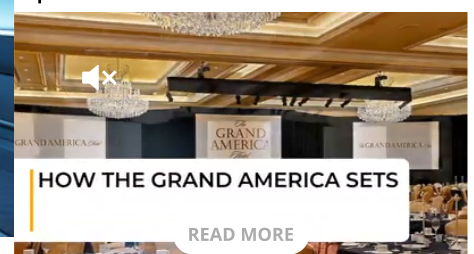
SLC International Airport has finished a major part of Phase 3 — and it's very, very blue

The River Tunnel is an art installation in the new tunnel that will connect Concourses A and B

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Construction workers walk through the completed Salt Lake City International Airport's River Tunnel in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. | Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News PURCHASE IMAGE



By Tyler Nelson

Tyler Nelson is a copy editor for Deseret News. He loves to write about sports, AI and gaming.

The River Tunnel, a major art installation that is part of Salt Lake City International Airport's Phase 3 of reconstruction, has been completed. It was installed in the airport's new Central Tunnel, which, when opened, will link Concourses A and B. On Wednesday, media members were given an early look at the tunnel and tour of the installation.

What is the River Tunnel?

The River Tunnel is an art installation by artist Gordon Huether, who is also responsible for the restored Hoberman Arch from the 2002 Winter Olympic Games and "The Peaks" art installation at the airport.

An information sheet described the River Tunnel as "an immersive experience designed to create the sense of walking on the floor of a river, with light and natural currents overhead." Per the tour, that mission has been accomplished.

The installation takes up essentially the entirety of the Central Tunnel. LED lights overlaid with blue cloth shine blue light on the tunnel. Blue panels attached to the ceiling represent the current of a river. There are also blue walls, blue wave panels on the walls and blue terrazzo floors. Speakers will also be placed in the tunnel to play water-themed music from a playlist curated by Huether.

Speaking during the tour, Huether said because airport travel can be stressful, he wanted to use both the visual and audio elements "to add a meditative and inspirational quality to the airport."

What is the Central Tunnel?

The Central Tunnel and River Tunnel installation are part of Phase 3 of the airport's reconstruction plan. The Central Tunnel will be a huge advantage to passengers getting to and from gates in Concourse B.

Currently, to reach gates at the far end of Concourse B, passengers walk down Concourse A, through the Mid Concourse Tunnel, and back up Concourse B. The trek from security to those furthest gates is almost a mile. The Central Tunnel will cut that nearly in half.

Bill Wyatt, executive director of Salt Lake City International Airport, spoke during about the benefits the Central Tunnel will bring. "A lot of people go a quarter mile their way to get to Concourse B," he said. "(Now) you can walk straight out of secur down into the tunnel instead of turning left and going all the way around."

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The completion of the tunnel and the addition of a few more gates to Concourse B will mark the end of Phase 3.

When will Phase 3 be done?

Major reconstruction of the new Salt Lake City International Airport began in 2014. It is planned to be completed in four phases.

11

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Phase 1 began in 2017 and was completed in 2020. It included adding rental car services, building the Central Terminal, Concourse A-west and Concourse B.

Phase 2 was completed in 2023 and involved building Concourse A-east, which added 22 gates and 19 concessions, and making preparations for the Central Tunnel.

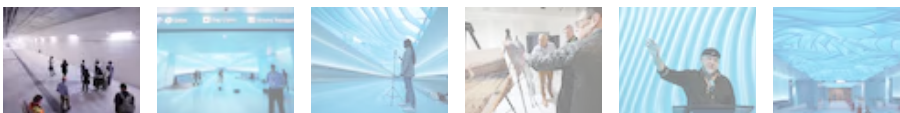
Phase 3 involves adding several more gates to Concourse B and finishing the Central Tunnel and several art installations in and around it, including the River Tunnel. And while the art installation is almost finished, the tunnel itself still needs some work. The end of Phase 3, and the opening of the tunnel, is slated for Oct. 22.



← 1 of 6 →



Media look over the future Salt Lake City International Airport's train tunnel in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. | Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News PURCHASE IMAGE

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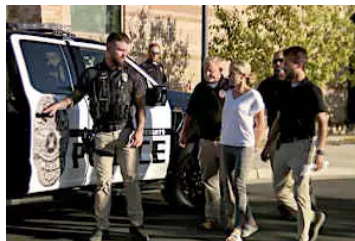
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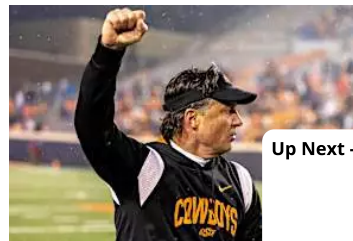
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