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Yes, the new Salt Lake City airport tunnel will be a shorter walk. It's also artsy

KUER 90.1 | By Saige Miller

Published April 3, 2024 at 5:24 PM MDT

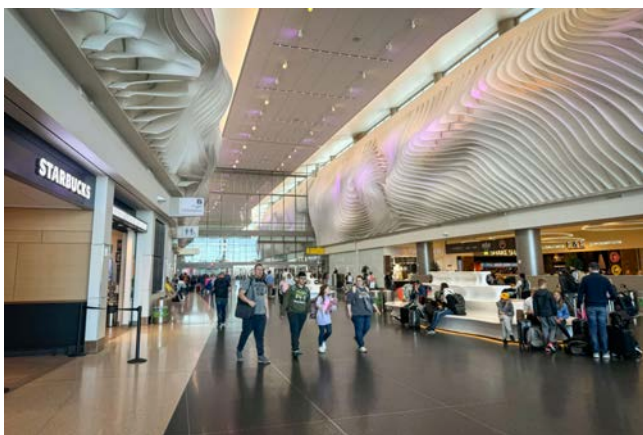
*Saige Miller / KUER*

The new Salt Lake City International Airport tunnel, April 3, 2024. It'll shorten the walk from security to Concourse B. It's also an interactive art piece by Gordon Huether.

Where in Utah can you be 26 feet underground and 12 feet above water at the same time?

The answer is a new tunnel at the Salt Lake City International Airport. Starting in October it will shorten the walk to Concourse B. It will also feature an art installation known as "The River Tunnel" to make the journey more enjoyable.

Those who have traveled through the airport aren't afraid to share their complaints about the long walk from the security checkpoint to Concourse B. Right now, you need to trek halfway through the west side of Concourse A, then hop on an escalator down to the "Mid Concourse Tunnel," where you walk the length of nearly two Salt Lake City blocks before arriving at the entrance of Concourse B. Altogether, the stroll is [a little over half a mile](#).



Saige Miller / KUER

Passengers travel through the Salt Lake City International Airport, April 3, 2024.

Enter the central or “The River Tunnel.” The \$80 million project and latest addition to the airport will cut the walk almost in half.

“You’ll walk out here straight into the tunnel on your way to the B concourse without having to walk a quarter mile out of your way,” said [Bill Wyatt](#), executive director of the airport. “So we think it’ll make a huge difference.”

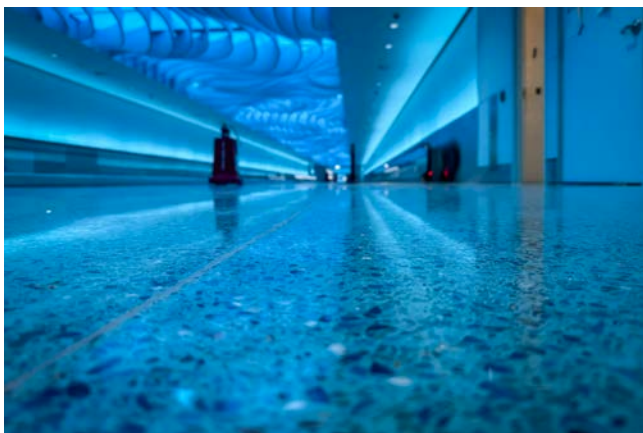
The tunnel is equipped with six moving walkways and is estimated to take only 10 minutes to get from Concourse B to baggage claim. Even with the condensed mileage, Wyatt doesn’t believe the tunnel will eliminate the grumbles of a long walk entirely, but it’ll certainly help.



A shorter walk isn’t all the tunnel has to offer.

The art installation created by artist [Gordon Huether](#) seeks to transform the space into an experience. The \$5.5 million “The River Tunnel” is complete with soft aqua-blue lightning, big wave-like fins that cover the walls and ceilings and the terrazzo floor resembles sparkly stones found in a riverbed.

“There’s a meditative quality to it. There’s an inspirational quality to it,” said Huether. “Add a little sparkle to your travel.”



Saige Miller / KUER

Artist Gordon Huether's "The River Tunnel" art installation featured in the new direct connection tunnel to Concourse B at the Salt Lake City International Airport. It features big wave-like fins, aqua-blue lightning and a terrazzo floor that resembles sparkly stones found in a riverbed. The tunnel will open to travelers in October 2024.

The art doesn't stop at the visuals. Huether also added an auditory component. He curated a playlist of "just under 100 songs" to accompany travelers as they make their way through the tunnel. Each time someone travels through the tunnel "you're going to hear a different song."

"There's 'Take me to the River,' Talking Heads. There's Johnny Cash, There's 'Beautiful Boy,' John Lennon. There's Pavarotti. It's totally eclectic," he said.

Even Utahns' favorite local musician – Post Malone – made it onto the setlist.

While the airport has been under construction since 2014, its expansion isn't over. Wyatt said they have plans to add a Concourse C to the mix and it will be fully furnished with a train. Airport officials have already identified where the train will operate and Wyatt said the tunnel space for it is "going to sit here empty for a while." That's because the construction of the train and additional concourse depends on travel volume.

Wyatt said they want 35 million passengers to go through the airport before any big construction starts. The airport currently sees around 27 million passengers per year. But Wyatt is confident that the goal will be reached swiftly.

"I would say the next decade – it will be the decade of the 30s – when that happens."

Editor's Note: The Salt Lake City International Airport is a sponsor of KUER.

Updated: April 11, 2024 at 8:22 AM MDT

This story was updated to reflect The Salt Lake City International Airport's sponsorship of KUER.

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Saige is a politics reporter and co-host of KUER's State Street politics podcast

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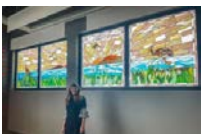
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