

## Washington Dulles International Airport Goes High Tech

By Gary Boyer

“Nearly 90 percent of my 500 daily customers are in a hurry—they are business people passing through the D.C. area on business trips,” Meenu Kochhar, Valet Parking Manager, Washington Dulles International Airport, explains. The reason customers choose her valet service is simple: It is faster.

Because of the service the lot provides, Meenu and her staff point with pride to the fact that nearly all of her customers are regulars.

“Our customers get in and out fast,” she says, “and that’s what it’s all about.”

### Upgrading Business Operations

Aerolink Transportation manages all of the parking operations for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) at Dulles. To improve customer service and enhance its business operations, MWAA automated the Dulles hourly and daily self-parking lots. This automation increased the speed and eased the handling of customer traffic. Additionally, new systems strengthened management effectiveness in accounting and operations.

However, when MWAA evaluated the valet operation, it became apparent that they needed a product designed for a valet operation and customized for their own unique needs. That is when Bill Lanham, General Business Analyst of the Contract Management Division for MWAA, stepped up to make additional changes.

Bill says they designed the automation for the Dulles valet



Dulles attendant checks in customer vehicle using a zControl handheld unit.

operation back-to-front. First, they evaluated auditing, reporting, and management. Next, they tackled operations. Through a competitive bid, MWAA chose the zControl™ Valet Parking Management System by ZipPark™ because its design favors valet systems, providing MWAA a real-time data system with customized revenue control ability.

“We can get any report we want,” Bill says. “Vehicles per day; vehicles per jockey, per hour; vehicles checked in by each attendant; vehicles checked out by each cashier; the number of customers who paid in cash; the number of customers who paid by credit card; which credit cards were used—you name it!”

“The new system simplifies our records management function,” he

adds. “For example, in case of a disputed charge, we can locate a customer’s electronic signature, print it out, and send it to the credit card company in less than a minute. Using the old manual system, that might have taken the better part of a day.”



zControl POS unit at Dulles.

zControl’s Windows®-based reports integrate with Word, Excel, and other programs. Furthermore, they print on standard office printers. Auditors and managers now spend more time auditing and managing and less time searching through boxes of paper records or driving to pick up reports.

### Keeping the Customers Satisfied

A team of uniformed attendants waits by the door at the Dulles

valet lot, each one ready to meet a customer, check-in the vehicle, and get the customer on the way to a flight. If it is the customer's first visit, the attendant enters all customer and vehicle information on a handheld unit using a stylus. On future visits, the attendant simply enters the returning customer's license plate number and all account information appears, providing a personal touch as the attendant welcomes the customer by name. A few touches of the stylus makes a record of any damage the car might show on arrival, and then a jockey parks the vehicle.

The Dulles valet operation consists of two lots, the Valet Service Center (the vehicle drop-off and pick-up point) and the Valet Remote Lot (the long-term and overflow parking lot). Vehicles are moved about two miles from the airport to the Remote Lot, where they park until a few hours before the customer's scheduled return. The system constantly monitors each vehicle's location, keeping track of every detail of its movement, making known the exact location of every vehicle, even vehicles in transit.

Meenu says that before the system's installation, the cashier line often created a major bottleneck, especially on Thursday and Friday afternoons. Now, the customer spends only seconds at the cashier counter. As the system records real-time data, it sends vehicle information to the *zControl Jockey Console*<sup>TM</sup> that provides vehicle location to the next available jockey. Car retrieval begins, even before the customer finishes at the cashier.

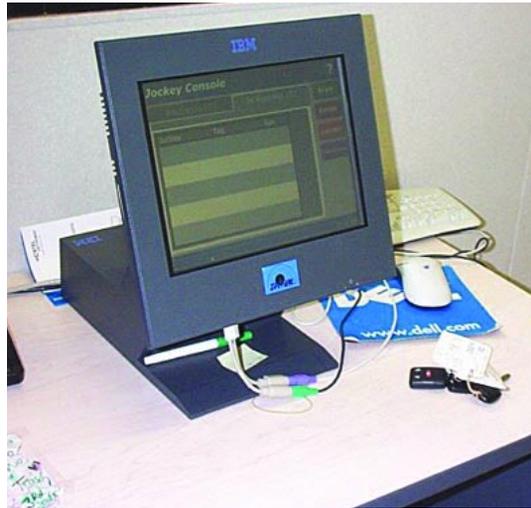
### **Training Provides the Key**

The first month using the system required gathering all customer information, which took time. Once completed and the customer database was built, however, check-in became fast, and according to a long-time attendant at Dulles, "Amazing."

"We hear very few complaints since the new system was installed," the attendant says.

According to Bill, it was the methodical training program that provided the key to success.

"Nobody likes change," he says. "So one of the first things we did was work with our attendants, cashiers, and



*zControl Jockey Console in Dulles Jockey Room.*

During the first weeks of operation, Meenu Kochhar set up and staffed two cashier desks, one for the old system and one for the *zControl* system.

"We had to run the new and the old simultaneously until we could clear the entire old inventory," she explains. "And we had one really insane week when the first round of customers began returning from their trips and wanted to check out. But we got through it fine."

### **Increased Productivity and Reduced Costs**

The new system has already had a significant impact in the eight short weeks it has been operational.

"We've already gone from three cashiers to one," Bill says, "even during the busiest times. In addition, we have reassigned the other two employees to duties where they will directly enhance customer service. We have brought the *zControl* self-serve kiosk online to further expedite checkout."

The system's flexibility and expandability added clip-on card readers for two of its handheld units so that attendants can check out customers

without entering the office. Aerolink is tracking activity using *zControl* reports, so that in the near future they will be able to pinpoint the busiest and slowest times, enabling staff to be more productive.

For Meenu, the new system enables her operation to increase volume, enhance productivity, and provide customers with better service. P



*New zControl self-serve kiosk at Dulles.*