

SUBJECT: Hartsfield-Jackson Airport

Security Info Watch

Homeless fill Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport atrium overnight

By: McClatchy

Atlanta airport officials like to boast that Hartsfield-Jackson International is the world's busiest and most efficient airport, with a terminal that always looks "opening day fresh."

But over the past few months, the airport's domestic terminal has become more known for being filled with homeless people overnight and into the early morning hours.

For years, there have periodically been some homeless people at the airport, which is a public place open 24 hours a day. But the closure last year of downtown Atlanta's Peachtree-Pine shelter, which housed as many as 500 people, combined with a prolonged spate of frigid temperatures, has resulted in larger numbers of homeless seeking out a place to escape the cold.

The City of Atlanta opens warming centers when the temperature drops. Still, over the past couple of months many homeless have been taking MARTA to the Atlanta airport stop, settling down in the comfy chairs in the domestic terminal atrium or stretching out on the floor.

For some travelers passing through the airport, it's a startling sight.

Police facing an 'epidemic'

There have already been incidents involving homeless at the airport.

On Jan. 28, a homeless man exposed himself near the airport domestic terminal atrium, according to a police report.

The man, who was arrested for indecent exposure, had been released from prison in September and had an "extensive arrest record dating back to 2001 with several violent crime charges" including simple battery, carrying a concealed weapon, aggravated assault and felony murder, according to the report. "The arrestee stated he's homeless and he comes out to the airport to sleep."

Last year, a homeless man was arrested at Hartsfield-Jackson with a machete, a 10-inch butcher knife and five scissors, according to police.

Police officers had raised concerns about "having to be hands off on the homeless" for a period of time recently, said Vince Champion, Southeast regional director for the International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

"We've had quite a few problems with officers being attacked," Champion said. "Some of [the homeless] aren't as mentally stable as they should be. We don't know what's in their bags, we don't know what they're carrying... You've had people urinating in the corners of the airport."

Officers in the last couple of weeks gained more authority for enforcement to address the issue of homeless at the airport, he said. A loitering ordinance dictates that it's "unlawful for any person to use or remain in the airport for the purpose of lodging," except in the case of severe weather, flight delays or other disruption to airport activity.

Yet that hasn't stopped homeless people from going to Hartsfield-Jackson.

Police officers at the airport "stand ready to address any criminal activity, regardless of the source," according to Atlanta Police Department spokesman Carlos Campos. "They are also committed to helping any individual experiencing homelessness they encounter to understand the resources for assistance available to them."

Hartsfield-Jackson plans to focus on striking partnerships to help homeless to find resources to find shelter, including plans for dedicated Travelers Aid services to assist the homeless at the airport with finding resources.

Champion, with the police officers union, also said the real cause of the problem at the airport "is a societal issue."

"There's not as many shelters for the homeless to go to and they're trying to find a place," Champion said. "The homeless problem at the airport is the homeless problem, period."

<http://www.securityinfowatch.com/news/12395639/homeless-fill-atlantas-hartsfield-jackson-airport-atrium-overnight>

SUBJECT: City Council

Atlanta Business Chronicle

Atlanta City Council eliminates cash bonds

By: Dave Williams

The Atlanta City Council voted late Monday to do away with requiring cash bonds for suspects charged with most minor offenses.

But the unanimous vote came only after a lengthy, contentious debate over which offenses should qualify under the ordinance and which should still require cash bonds.

Supporters said forcing suspects picked up on non-violent misdemeanor charges to remain in jail simply because they can't afford to bail themselves out is an injustice.

"It is important that we not have wealth-based detention," Councilwoman Marci Overstreet said. "You should not be sitting in jail just because you don't have the money to get out."

Council members agreed to amend the ordinance by adding a short list of offenses that still will require cash bonds, including suspects accused of soliciting a sexual act or those on probation or parole. However, the council rejected a second amendment to require cash bonds for a longer list of offenses, including aggressive panhandling.

"We need to be very careful in our zeal to protect personal liberty [and] realize some of these crimes have victims," Councilman Michael Julian Bond said.

Bond suggested the city's corrections department keep track of whether the rate of no-shows in court rises after the city stops requiring cash bonds. The ordinance is due to take effect 30 days after Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms signs it.

In other business, the council unanimously passed a resolution opposing legislation before the General Assembly calling for a state takeover of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2018/02/06/atlanta-city-council-eliminates-cash-bonds.html>