

Those Automated Airport Exit Lanes, Though — Here's How They Work

So, what's the big deal with the Plattsburgh International Airport's new exit lanes we keep hearing so much about? How do they work?

The technology itself operates pretty simply. It's not so much what this automation adds to the airport that's impressive; it's what it eliminates, which is the need for TSA staff at the beginning of the exit lane.

The what? When passengers leave their planes and enter the airport, there's typically a TSA representative waiting to direct the rows of people from the secure area to the exit lane – where you leave, securely. This process can be hectic, especially when you're trying to keep hold of your carry-on and your kids, all while maintaining your place in the flow of traffic, which, let's be honest, tends to slow down right about here due to congestion.

Queue fanfare as the newly-installed automated exit lane portals are unveiled.

Now, instead of being greeted by a TSA rep and a huge crowd of people, passengers can say "hello" to these transparent portals and a more efficient exit process – the same way they'd encounter an automatic door at the entrance of a grocery store.

Except this one? It talks to you.

Once the light above the portal turns green and an individual enters, as only an individual can (sorry, no parties in the portal!), his or her movements are monitored by the sensors in the metal framework. These look like little holes in a sequence – hardly noticeable, unless you're looking for them. If you try to turn around the way you came, the sensors signal the portal to tell you, "WRONG WAY, PLEASE GO BACK!" An alarm accompanies this semi-sassy, yet understandable request. Why the sass, you ask?

Because those TSA reps that used to be there ensured people couldn't re-enter the plane once they exited – it's this detail that makes the area "secure." If someone breached the secure area by going back into the plane (AKA, traveling from the "public" area to the "secure" area), TSA had to re-scan everyone getting ready to fly who had already been scanned. Hard pass on that.

Now, the portals police the area, so TSA doesn't have to.

If you *don't* turn around and the portal *doesn't* scold you (well, to be fair, it does say "please"), then you keep moving forward about ten feet, and the door on the other end opens just like the one behind you closed. Now, you're able to exit! This is called "flow mode". You know about #GymFlow, #Workflow, and #FridayFlow. Get ready for #PortalFlow. This setting maintains traffic, moving it quickly in the right direction, by ensuring you – and your kids! – don't get trapped inside. As an added precaution for those traveling with youngsters, make sure to keep the kiddos close once you enter the first door.

So, what if something drops out of your carry-on as your passing through? Is it gone forever, like socks in the dryer or last weekend's Snapchats? No, silly. So dramatic. The sensors detect objects too. If an object is inside after a person has exited, the alarm will sound, and -- if necessary -- a security representative will run in and grab the abandoned item and return it to you, probably in front of everyone.

How embarrassing.

But hey, it's still less embarrassing than being the one responsible for TSA rescanning everyone who exited the plane because you forgot your carry-on entirely on the way out. Does that even happen?

Well, now it won't – that's for sure.

This high-tech system is one of two in the country – the other is in Seattle. Get on that #PortalFlow, and book your next flight out of the Plattsburgh International Airport today, so you can check out these fancy automated exit lanes for yourself.