

# LEVELe Takes the PHX Sky Train to the Next Level



**Project:** Phoenix Sky Train, Phoenix Sky Harbor Int'l Airport  
**Location:** Phoenix, AZ  
**Year of Installation:** 2012

**Product Used:** LEVELe Wall System and LEVELe-104 Elevator Interiors. Materials: stainless steel, Sandstone finish, Dallas pattern; stainless steel, Sandstone finish; and aluminum.  
**Architect:** HOK, Culver City, CA  
**General Contractor:** Hensel Phelps

**The Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is in the midst of a massive, estimated \$1.58 billion project to introduce an automated train/people mover to its facility. For the initial phase of the project, architectural firm HOK of Culver City was tasked with designing four stations—a remote station that connects to the METRO light rail system, a station that connects to a separate parking area, and stations in Terminals 3 and 4.**

Architect Chris Anderson of HOK explained that beyond the functional goals of what has been dubbed the “Phoenix Sky Train,” it was also part of a larger effort to modernize the airport.

“Our aesthetic goals were to rebrand the airport in a more international, high-tech style,” said Anderson.



*LEVELe wall system with Float panels in Stainless Steel, Sandstone finish, Dallas Impression pattern and custom painted finish*

## First Stop: LEVELe

In keeping with that modern aesthetic, Anderson said it was important to use state-of-the-art materials to enhance the public’s perception. Large expanses of wall space between the airport and the Terminal 4 station needed a design solution.

Anderson said, “We always envisioned a metal panel system for this project, and although the airport did consider other alternatives, we convinced them that metal would be money well-spent.”

HOK specified Forms+Surfaces’ LEVELe Wall System to cover over 25,000 square feet of surface space in the airport, including a 300-foot-long feature wall.

The LEVELe Wall System pairs tremendous design flexibility with the benefits of a panelized system. Designed to incorporate a wide range of surfacing materials, the system’s aluminum-framed panels have a lightweight, fire-rated structural backing and mount to a framework of extrusions, creating a versatile system that is easy to install and maintain.

“LEVELe is a great product,” said Anderson. “We liked that it had clean lines and accommodated stainless steel. It had that modern aesthetic we were looking for. We also liked that it was very durable and easy to maintain. If a panel gets damaged in any way, it’s simple to replace.”

The airport’s facilities group approved the use of the Dallas



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pattern, as well as our High Durability Sandstone finish, on the stainless steel panels because it is excellent at hiding fingerprints – a huge plus for such a high-use public space.

## Staying on Track

As with any project of this scale, there have been some challenges along the way. Project Manager Michael Gallegos of Hensel Phelps Construction Co. said that basically every vertical surface was clad in LEVELe, and some of those surfaces were harder to reach than others.

For example, two large escalator wells in Terminal 4 are approximately 60 feet high, making access difficult. “We needed to build scaffolding and coordinate with the escalator contractor, as we were basically installing panels right over their equipment,” said Gallegos.

Additionally, while there were a lot of standard sized panels, there were also hundreds of panels in varying sizes and configurations to fit in all the corners and returns, so at times the project resembled a large puzzle. Everything had to be precisely field-measured prior to installation, so the panels would fit together properly. Timing those measurements throughout all of the areas of the airport undergoing construction was a major challenge.

## A Platform for Success

The new automated stations are currently undergoing testing, as is the new rail system, and Phase One of this project is scheduled to be fully operational in early 2013. The Phoenix Sky Train will be free to the public and will run 24-hours a day with predictable travel times – arriving at stations about every three minutes during peak periods and delivering passengers to their destinations within five minutes of boarding.

In addition to the expansive LEVELe Wall System, Terminal 4 also features six LEVELe-104 Elevator Interiors that pair stainless steel with Sandstone finish and stainless steel with Sandstone finish and Dallas pattern, bringing a cohesive look to the new station.

We are currently working on the next station, SkyTrain 1A, which will also utilize our LEVELe Wall System and Elevator Interiors. This next phase of the project is slated for completion in late 2013.

Forms+Surfaces Regional Manager Bill Sargent said, “Everyone on the project has been extremely pleased with how well it has progressed, the simplicity and elegance of the LEVELe system, and the unparalleled fit and finish of the actual panels.”

Gallegos agreed, saying, “It’s a fantastic system; it looks just beautiful and the Airport really loves it.”