

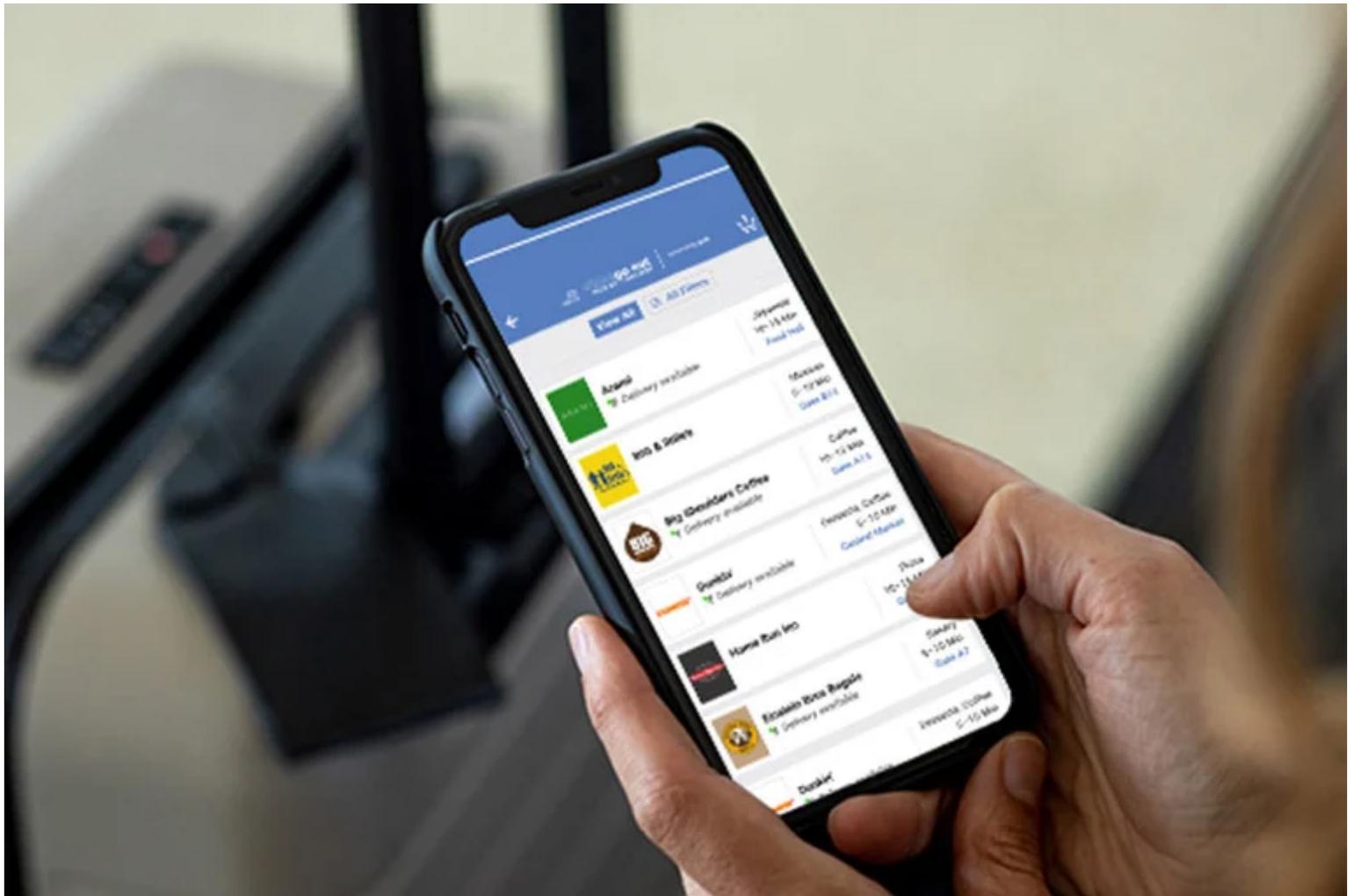
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Midway launches gate-side food delivery

Contactless ordering comes to the Southwest Side airport, and will be available throughout O'Hare next year.

ALLY MAROTTI □ □



Midway Airport's concessions food court

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Mobile ordering launched this week at restaurants inside Chicago Midway International Airport, allowing travelers to get food delivered to their gate.

The contactless ordering is available from participating restaurants including Billy Goat Tavern & Grill, Dunkin' Express and Home Run Inn Pizza. About 40 percent of the shops and restaurants in Midway are open now, due to the pandemic-induced reduction in passengers, said Sherrie Medina, director of marketing and communications at Midway Partnership, which runs concessions at the airport.

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“This is another important step taken to ensure our passengers have the availability of touch-free options that keep them safe while traveling through Midway,” Jamie L. Rhee, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Aviation, which runs the airport, said in a statement.

Passenger volume was down about 58 percent year-over-year at Midway in October, the most recent data available from the city. And the number of flights at the Southwest Side airport are down more than 35 percent.

To order, travelers can scan QR codes placed around the airport or visit GoEatMDW.com. They can choose to pick up their order or have it delivered. Customers will pay a \$2.99 delivery fee, Medina said. Midway Partnership is covering technology costs for the restaurants.

Houston-based Grab is providing the technology platform for online ordering, and a company called AtYourGate will make the deliveries. Chicago-based Hyde Park Hospitality is handling technology support, Medina said.

Grab and AtYourGate offer similar services in other airports, including LaGuardia Airport in New York. Medina said there are plans to launch delivery of magazines and other non-food items soon.

“It’s harder to get things going in (airports),” Medina said. “With COVID, it’s part of the silver lining that this technology we want to offer has just been accelerated because it’s needed.”

O’Hare International Airport has app ordering available in Terminal 5, said Amber Ritter, a managing deputy commissioner for aviation. The Chicago Department of Aviation expects to select a vendor for the domestic terminals at O’Hare soon, and the program should be fully rolled out by the end of the first quarter.

"If you don't want to stand in line at a concessionaire and wait for your food, you can order wherever you feel comfortable and have the food come to you," Ritter says. "That's going to be a huge boon for crowding. We've already worked with concessions to remove tables and chairs to allow people to be socially distant."

Crowding will be more of an issue as vaccines become widespread and leisure travel picks up. United recently said early bookings indicate summer travel will be significantly higher than now but not back to normal levels.

John Pletz contributed.

Inline Play

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