

Jane's Airport Review

## Airlines evaluate bag tag-and-track capability

### Frits Njio, Amsterdam

Amsterdam Schiphol is about to complete a trial of a permanent tagging and tracking system, which would allow smartphone-carrying passengers to check in their own hold luggage and monitor its progress.

Netherlands-based FastTrack developed the eTag and eTrack systems. These connect the baggage process for the benefit of passengers, said founder and Chief Financial Officer David van Hoytema. As an electronic baggage label, eTag enables passengers to check in their bags online or at home through a smartphone app; with eTrack, baggage is then tracked via Bluetooth low energy and satellite signals.

"Track & trace via Bluetooth is a very limited solution as its range is maximum 100 m", said van Hoytema. "We use GPS, GSM, and Bluetooth, so bags are always traceable nearly everywhere on the planet."



*Schiphol has been hosting trials of a baggage tag-and-trace system. (FastTrack)*

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Dutch telecom provider KPN, Air France-KLM, and Delta Air Lines are also involved in the trial at Schiphol. By removing the need to check bags in at the airport (although they still need to be dropped off), the project stakeholders hope to prove cost savings for airlines and an improved passenger experience. "Dedicated drop-off points would be created" for eTag-enabled luggage, said van Hoytema. "Tagging today accounts for around 50% of the bag check-in process."

An Auto Flight Mode (co-developed with KLM) enables eTag and eTrack to comply with air safety regulations, by automatically switching off the devices before take-off. They automatically switch on again after landing.



With the tracking capability, passengers and airlines using eTag and eTrack would be able to pinpoint the location of their bags once the destination is reached. "If there is something wrong, the passenger receives an alert through the app immediately [with] inclusive re-routing information from the airline," said van Hoytema.

Security features include an alarm if the bag is taken beyond a pre-set distance en route to the airport, and a message is automatically generated for the passenger whenever the bag is opened, displaying the time and location of the incident.

The eTag features an inbuilt battery with a multiyear lifetime, while eTrack can be used for 10 flights before its battery requires recharging through a USB connection.

FastTrack has not disclosed the retail price of eTag and eTrack, and is awaiting the outcome of the Schiphol trial before extending the system to other airlines. "We [will] work together with airlines and existing baggage software companies to integrate with their systems, offering even the option of quicker rerouting if misplaced," said van Hoytema.

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