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The Houston Airport System (HAS) handled 54.5 million passengers in '16, a 1.2 percent drop from 55.2 million the year before. A healthy increase in international passenger traffic couldn't offset declines on domestic routes. Domestic traffic has trended downward since mid-'14, about the time oil prices started to collapse. International traffic has trended up since early '10, coinciding with Houston's rise as a global city.

HOUSTON AIRPORT SYSTEM PASSENGER TRAFFIC

	'15	'16	Change, '15 – '16	
Domestic	44,430,859	42,950,231	-1,480,628	-3.3%
International	10,756,796	11,574,535	817,739	+7.6%
Total	55,187,655	54,524,766	-662,889	-1.2%

Source: Houston Airport System

Two factors support the growth in international passenger traffic: the addition of international service from Houston Hobby Airport (HOU) and the entry of new foreign flag air carriers to the markets and existing carriers expanding international service out of Bush Intercontinental (IAH). HOU handled 801,000 international passengers in '16, its first full year as an international gateway.

Despite the weak economy, HAS handled 417,484 million metric tons of air freight in '16, up 2.0 percent from 409,383 million the year before. Since '06, air freight traffic has grown 13.4 percent. Domestic cargo accounts for 52.5 percent, international for 48.5 percent. About half of all Houston's international air cargo traffic originates or terminates in Europe, followed by Asia/Africa/Australia and then Central/South America.

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