



TESTIMONY OF

Karen R. Burke

Federal Security Director – State of Nevada  
Transportation Security Administration  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

BEFORE

Committee on Homeland Security  
United States House of Representatives

ON

“Examining DHS’ Efforts to Improve Processing for International Visitors”

May 24, 2022  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Good morning, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Katko, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and to provide updates on steps the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is taking to enhance security while travel volumes increase, our plans to improve the passenger experience, and ongoing initiatives being carried out at our innovation checkpoint.

Within the aviation network, TSA is responsible for the security of more than 430 federalized airports with screening services forecasted this summer servicing over 24,000 domestic flights and nearly 3,300 outbound international flights per day. Nationwide, TSA routinely screens more than 2 million passengers and 1.4 million checked items daily for explosives and other dangerous items. During calendar year 2021, TSA screened 585.3 million travelers, an average of about 1.6 million passengers per day, which represents 69 percent of pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels in 2019. On average, 97.6 percent of non-TSA PreCheck® passengers waited less than 20 minutes at airport security checkpoints, while 96.2 percent of TSA PreCheck® passengers waited less than five minutes in those lanes. We enrolled seven new airlines and 1.8 million individuals in the TSA PreCheck® expedited screening program, bringing the total number of Known Traveler Number holders to more than 27 million.

Locally, during calendar year 2021, TSA Harry Reid International Airport (LAS) screened 18.6 million travelers, or about 51 thousand each day, which represents 78 percent of pre-COVID pandemic levels in 2019. On average, 98.2 percent of non-TSA PreCheck® passengers waited less than 20 minutes at airport security checkpoints, while 99.9 percent of TSA PreCheck® passengers waited less than five minutes in those lanes.

During the period of January 1 to May 1, 2022, TSA personnel have prevented more than 1,900 firearms (85 percent were loaded) from being carried into airplane passenger cabins or the secure area of airports. Since July 2021, TSA has trained almost 1,500 flight crew members in Crew Member Self-Defense training to address increasing trends in unruly passengers. TSA also partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration to rescind TSA PreCheck® eligibility for passengers who are disruptive aboard flights or during security screening process.

TSA has continued deployment of Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) with 101 additional units (total 1,621 in the field) and deployed an additional 52 (total of 357) in the field) Computed Tomography (CT) scanners, which significantly improves detection while also allowing travelers to proceed through security screening with reduced physical contact. TSA is also very focused on strengthening checkpoint operations through the development and acquisition of new technology in order to counter the ever-changing threat. The Fiscal Year (FY) 23 President's budget request, if enacted, will enable TSA to continue investing in innovative technologies and processes to improve the effectiveness of its operations. This includes requesting funding for the Checkpoint Property Screening System (CPSS) program for checkpoint CT investments and the On-Person Screening (OPS) Algorithm Development to reduce false alarms.

TSA continues to evaluate new and emerging technologies that increase security while improving the customer experience for all travelers. Technology that we are currently deploying to checkpoints includes CTs, which enables 3D imaging for enhanced visual interpretation of a carry-on bag. This imaging technology allows Transportation Security Officers to get a better view of the contents of the bag without having to physically open it to determine if there is a

threat. As the checkpoint CT algorithms improve, not only will there be better detection but also fewer false alarms, ultimately providing improved checkpoint operations.

Checkpoint CT systems with Automated Screening Lanes, or ASLs, provide key process automation capabilities that enhance the security checkpoint experience. Allowing multiple locations for travelers to place their items and automated return of bins back to the front of the lane. ASLs have integrated sensors throughout the system to maintain positive bag control, allowing the officer to remain focused on screening. The ASL also makes diverting bags for secondary search easier and smoother. These features will allow for higher throughput, fewer bag jams, and overall improved passenger experience.

Advanced Imaging Technology, or AIT, safely screens passengers for both metallic and non-metallic threats such as weapons and explosives without physical contact. As far as next generation equipment for on-person screening, TSA is pushing the envelope on algorithm development, lowering the false alarm rates, developing gender neutral algorithms, and making progress on deploying Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) systems with new capabilities that offer a more natural hands down experience. The improved threat detection algorithms coupled with lower false alarm rates means fewer passenger pat downs, which improves throughput and the overall customer experience.

TSA is also technologically improving the entry point to the checkpoint, referred to as the Travel Document Checker (TDC). These investments look to enhance CAT machines with biometric, digital identity, and self-service capabilities in response to COVID-19 and the growing availability of identity solutions in the market. These upgrades to CAT include

biometric 1:1 (one to one) facial matching capabilities that compares a live image capture against to the image on a credential (e.g., passport or ID photo). TSA is also evaluating a biometric electronic gate form factor, AutoCAT, that provides additional self-service and queue management capabilities. TSA is currently updating all CAT units in preparation for REAL ID implementation in May 2023.

Other notable advancements include work to establish an overarching checkpoint built on Open Architecture principles of open data formats and open interfaces. TSA sees this as the future to diversify the transportation security marketplace and rapidly respond to emerging threats.

To support these activities, TSA established the Advancing the Checkpoint Environment (ACE) mission to provide an operational lab space that allows new technologies and processes to be assessed concurrently, to drive decision-making with data, and showcase the art of the possible. On September 3, 2019, TSA unveiled the ACE Innovation Checkpoint, a collaborative effort between TSA's Innovation Task Force (ITF), LAS, LAS local TSA, and the Clark County Department of Aviation in Las Vegas. The Innovation Checkpoint is an excellent example of the public and private sectors working in tandem to support the travel experience and as of March 2021, Innovation Checkpoint stakeholders have hosted 27 tours with various public and private sector entities. The Innovation Checkpoint was also the opening event for the Future Travel Experience, one of LAS' largest conferences, where over 250 people were in attendance. The continued partnership with the Clark County Department of Aviation is paramount in the success of TSA's mission at the Innovation Checkpoint.

The Innovation Checkpoint located in Terminal 3 at LAS allows for side-by-side assessment and evaluation of emerging security technologies in a live checkpoint environment. Data collected from these demonstrations is intended to help develop requirements for future innovative capabilities.

The Innovation Checkpoint showcases several technologies that enhance checkpoint security and enhance the passenger experience. There are currently four fully operational security lanes in this one-of-a-kind checkpoint that serves as a demonstration site for TSA to assess multiple people, process, and technology enhancements within a live checkpoint environment. It allows ITF and RCA Capability Managers to test an entire network of unique capabilities at the same time without interrupting airport operations and provides an enhanced professional experience for TSOs. The technologies being tested at the Innovation Checkpoint are designed to work in sync with each other to avoid an inefficient security experience.

Three of the current demonstrations at the Innovation Checkpoint are centered around Customer Movement Analytics. These technologies currently in the queue, on Lane 1 and Lane 3, provide increased visibility into day-to-day checkpoint operations and foster local TSA's ability to optimize the available resources.

TSA is also testing an integrated Ultraviolet-C (UV-C) light sanitization system, which is designed to disinfect bins as they go through the ASL's automated bin return system. Bins pass through an enclosed, metal box where they are exposed to a high-dose of UV-C light proven to inactivate bacteria and viruses, including COVID-19.

The Innovation Checkpoint Lane 3 and 4 host an Enhanced Advanced Imaging Technology (eAIT) scanner which screens travelers with their arms at their side instead of having to lift them over their head while being screened and displays an on-screen prompt if the traveler is improperly positioned, allowing officers to provide corrective feedback.

Finally, LAS is also using digital signage totems at the Innovation Checkpoint. These totems, which are completely programmable and can be populated with any approved information, currently display checkpoint wait-times and divestment instructions to enhance both communication and the passenger experience.

TSA's Capital Investment Plan seeks to continue to invest in technology that can increase passenger throughput, meet current detection standards, and connect to a secure network. We will also invest in research and development for next generation technologies.

TSA is dedicated to enhancing security and improving the passenger experience as travel increases to pre-pandemic levels. Through its consistent assessments of technologies, policies, and processes, TSA is able to ensure that we can effectively carry out our mission of protecting the Nation's transportation systems and ensuring freedom of movement for people and commerce. We are grateful for the support of Congress that has enabled us to continue to advance and improve the technology and tools we provide our frontline workforce to ensure the secure and efficient screening of passengers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.