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“Checkpoint of the Future: Evaluating TSA’s Innovation Task Force Initiative”
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Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Watson Coleman, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the checkpoint of the future and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey’s collaboration with the Transportation Security Administration and its Innovation Task Force. I currently serve as Assistant Director, Aviation Security and Technology for the Security Operations and Programs Department of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. In this capacity, I oversee security operations for New York’s John F. Kennedy International, LaGuardia, and Stewart International airports and for Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey. I am also the Second Vice Chair of the American Association of Airport Executives, which represents thousands of men and women across the country who manage and operate the nation’s airports.

The Port Authority’s airport system served a combined 129.4 million passengers in 2016. Specifically, Newark Liberty International processed 40.4 million, John F. Kennedy International hosted 58.9 million, LaGuardia greeted 29.8 million, and Stewart International served 275,000. Newark’s share of the NY/NJ area airport system passengers is 31.2 percent. It offers nonstop air service to more than 165 destinations aboard dozens of air carriers. Newark Liberty has an enormous economic impact on the region, responsible for: about 188,089 jobs, \$9.9 billion in annual wages, and \$27.2 billion in annual sales. Traffic at Newark Liberty is projected to grow by 5 percent in 2017, however, we have already seen an amazing actual growth of 10 percent this year to date over last year, far exceeding the national average of 2 to 4 percent traffic growth projected by the Federal Aviation Administration. Nationwide, TSA anticipates a 4 percent growth in passenger volume and expects to screen 228 million passengers between Memorial Day and Labor Day compared to 217 million passengers last summer. Thus, effective and efficient passenger screening is very important for our successful operation and service to travelers.

Terminal C, operated solely by United Airlines, at Newark Liberty International Airport accounts for 57 percent of the airport’s passenger volume, or 23.1 million travelers last year. There are currently 17 Automated Screening Lanes (ASL) deployed at Newark Liberty International Airport at the Terminal C checkpoint. The first of the lanes were installed in November 2016. United Airlines purchased the ASL equipment and paid for the necessary reconfiguration of the checkpoint area.

The new automated screening lanes offer several features that automate many of the functions previously conducted manually, which allows travelers to move more swiftly and efficiently through the checkpoint. These innovations include:

- Stainless steel countertops that were constructed to enable several passengers to place their items in bins simultaneously;
- Automated conveyor belts that draw bins into the X-ray machines, and return the bins back to the front of the queue for passengers;

- Carry-on bags that trigger an alarm warning of a potential threat are automatically pushed to a separate area to allow bins behind to continue through the screening process uninterrupted;
- Property bins that are 25 percent larger than the bins in standard screening lanes and large enough to hold roller bags;
- Unique Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags that are attached to each bin to allow for additional accountability of a traveler's items as they transit throughout the security process; and
- Cameras that capture photographic images of the contents of each bin, which are linked side-by-side to the X-ray image of a bag's contents.

The lanes have been well received by passengers at Newark Liberty and have been working as intended. We have seen an increase in passenger throughput at the TSA security checkpoint, which has helped to maintain reasonable wait times and reduce congestion in the public queuing area. The PANYNJ appreciates the investment that United was willing to make to provide these lanes as faster throughput and reduced congestion improves the passenger experience and reduces vulnerabilities in the public area.

Although the ASLs get travelers through the TSA screening checkpoint at a faster pace, it is our understanding that they do not reduce the number of Transportation Security Officers needed to effectively screen passengers. TSA is currently conducting a detailed data collection covering all key checkpoint activity, including detection and alarm rates, throughput, operations, maintenance, optimal configurations and staffing ratios, at the four airports where automated screening lanes are currently deployed. We encourage TSA to carefully analyze the data before making any staffing allocation decisions or changes to its resource allocation model. The improvements provided by the ASLs would be quickly negated by a premature or short-sighted reduction of TSA screening personnel.

The ASLs funded by United at Newark Liberty were launched at a time of crisis when TSA was unable to meet the surging passenger demand last spring and summer due to insufficient TSA personnel and resources. Fortunately, Congress was able to authorize additional funding for TSA personnel, overtime and canine deployments. It is vital that TSA receives the funding levels necessary to continue to ensure adequate TSO levels, canines and other resources to maintain checkpoint efficiency.

At the same time, airport operators and air carriers joined in partnership with TSA to provide contract personnel to cover non-security functions at the checkpoint in addition to the investments made in automated screening lanes. Airport and air carrier support of TSA checkpoint operations continue today, and the reasonable wait times across the country during the recent spring break travel season highlights the effectiveness of this on-going partnership. However, airport and air carrier resources are not infinite, and private industry cannot and should not be made responsible for funding TSA's primary and fundamental responsibility for screening passengers and baggage effectively and efficiently.

Federal funding resources are vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of TSA's Innovation Task Force. Additionally, Federal funding resources will allow TSA to make investments solely on the merits of an innovative technology or process without the bias of competitive advantage factors inherent in private sector funding decisions.

In addition to enhancing the passenger experience at airports through investments in ASLs and other technology, Federal funding holds the potential to spur further technological and process innovations to

fundamentally change checkpoint screening operating procedures. Possible enhancements include allowing passengers to pass through the checkpoint without stopping, taking off shoes or removing laptops from bags, carrying beverages and food while at the same time improving security and detection. As these technologies are developed, airports are eager to assist TSA with operational testing to ensure that these innovations work effectively in a challenging airport environment and do not inadvertently slow down passenger processing.

TSA's expedited screening program, PreCheck, provides a glimpse into the possibilities of a checkpoint of the future. The complementary program currently allows vetted and other eligible passengers to keep on their shoes and lightweight jackets and leave laptops and allowed liquids in their carry-on baggage. Unfortunately, PreCheck, as a government run procurement program, is not living up to its full potential.

Although TSA continues to slowly grow participation in the program, the PreCheck enrollment process is cumbersome, and enrollment options are severely limited. The private sector and industry stakeholders, including airport operators, have presented and advocated for innovative solutions that would increase participation in the PreCheck program and achieve the robust, critical mass levels originally envisioned for the program. TSA needs to follow the direction mandated by Congress in the FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016 to "publish application enrollment standards that add multiple private sector application capabilities for the PreCheck program to increase the public's enrollment access to such program." We hope that TSA will soon follow the direction of Congress to coordinate with interested parties to deploy TSA-approved ready-to-market private sector solutions; partner with the private sector to use kiosks, mobile devices or other mobile enrollment platforms to make enrollment easier; and, consider leveraging existing resources and abilities at airports to conduct fingerprint and background checks.

While responsibility for passenger and baggage screening are by law the sole responsibility of TSA, airports play an essential role in partnering with the agency to help it meet its core mission. The PANYNJ looks forward to continuing to partner with TSA to ensure effective, efficient and innovative security operations for the screening of passengers and baggage.

In addition to working with the TSA to meet its passenger and baggage screening mandates, airports perform a number of inherently local security-related functions at their facilities, including incident response and management, perimeter security, employee credentialing, access control, infrastructure and operations planning, and numerous local law enforcement and public safety functions.

Airport operators – just like the federal government – need the flexibility and resources to spur innovative solutions that meet or exceed current security requirements. Local funding sources, like the Passenger Facility Charge, can provide the resources necessary to facilitate innovation and technology investment at the local level to further enhance the myriad of airport security responsibilities.

The PANYNJ and airport operators across the country support the TSA's Innovation Task Force (ITF) efforts and look forward to more opportunities for direct partnership and engagement to test innovative solutions at the passenger checkpoint and throughout the airport environment. We hope that TSA's ITF can be sustainable for the long-term and enable the agency to be agile in its investment and deployment decisions. Agility is key to staying ahead of evolving threats to aviation, which continues to be a prime

target for terrorists. Again, Federal funding for the ITF will be necessary to ensure TSA has the ability to work with all interested industry partners, including airport operators, and can focus on innovations that have the potential to fundamentally change the screening process.

In the meantime, we cannot neglect or cut back on the TSA personnel, canines and other resources needed today to maintain effective and efficient screening operations for passengers and baggage at airports across the country. Innovation and technology investment must be made in addition to the staffing levels needed to accommodate the significant growth in air travel.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. As public agents, the PANYNJ and my airport colleagues across the country take our security mission very seriously. We welcome the opportunity to partner with TSA to introduce new and innovative approaches to enhancing security throughout the airport environment.