



“Assessing the TSA Checkpoint: The PreCheck Program and Airport Wait Times”

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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE**

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Good morning Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Watson Coleman, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Sharon Pinkerton and I am the Senior Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy at Airlines for America (A4A). Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss aviation security and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Pre✓™ program.

Overview. The safety and security of our passengers and employees is our single highest priority and we take aviation security very seriously. We share this common goal with the TSA and work cooperatively and collaboratively with them every day through programs like Known Crew Member (KCM) and TSA Pre✓™ (amongst many others) in an effort to keep our skies safe and secure with a focus on both passenger and cargo security.

When talking about the day-in and day-out challenges of aviation security it is important to be reminded of and to understand the depth and magnitude of what actually takes place and what is transported by air every single day. On a daily basis, U.S. airlines ---

- Fly more than 2 million passengers;
- Carry close to 50,000 tons of cargo;
- Operate approximately 27,000 flights; and
- Serve more than 800 airports in nearly 80 countries;

Given the vast geography and sheer numbers it is exceedingly important that we approach security in a smart, effective and efficient manner that best utilizes the finite resources available. This becomes even more imperative given the expectation that both passenger and cargo traffic will grow in the coming years.

Risk-Based Security. The administration of risk-based security principles is of paramount importance to aviation security today and in the future. A risk-based approach recognizes that “one size fits all” security is not the optimum response to threats. Risk-based, intelligence-driven analysis has been a widely accepted approach



to aviation security for some time. The 9/11 Commission, for example, in 2004 called for thorough, risk-based analysis in evaluating aviation-security issues.¹

One of our nation's greatest challenges is to strike the right balance between managing risk and over-regulation. Enhanced security and the efficient movement of passengers and cargo are not mutually exclusive goals, thus government and industry must continue to work together to find pragmatic approaches to security that appropriately balance these issues. If we do not achieve that balance, we will lose passenger and shipper goodwill, clog up our airports, slow world trade and in fact diminish the level of security we have currently achieved. By utilizing and following risk-based principles we provide a security framework that can be more nimble and responsive to current and emerging threats and allows TSA to focus resources on high-risk passengers and cargo.

As we will discuss today, TSA Pre✓™ is a fundamental layer and key program component of an effective and efficient risk-based security system. Today we will share our recommendations for how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and TSA can improve enrollment in TSA Pre✓™ and other screening programs. We also believe it is time for a reassessment of DHS screening programs to look at potential ways to modernize and potentially create categories or levels of lower-risk passengers that may not be in or want to join TSA Pre✓™ but that could be identified and more effectively moved through security in a manner that takes less TSA screening resources.

The Lesson of the Summer of 2016. Our industry has not forgotten the summer of 2016 when many travelers unfortunately experienced unacceptably long TSA screening lines at airports across the nation. The root causes of those excessively long wait times were clear to many. Looking back at the previous summer in 2015 there was a record setting travel season but the system did not experience excessive wait times. However, in 2016, as a result of reported TSA screening failures in a DHS Inspector General's report, DHS significantly cut back on risk-based security efficiencies without making an adjustment to staffing and other processes to accommodate those modifications. **This is a key lesson learned:** every action taken has consequences, some unintended. Given the known and immediate impacts, we do not believe TSA should simply stop the current practice of using canines and a rules based approach to give certain passengers a TSA Pre✓™ experience without taking action on the other end of the security equation to ensure that more people are enrolled in TSA Pre✓™ or have another vetting procedure in place that will enable a Known Traveler experience for low-

¹ In its final report, the Commission stated: "The U.S. government should identify and evaluate the transportation assets that need to be protected, set risk-based priorities for defending them, [and] select the most practical and cost effective ways of doing so..." Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, at 391 (2004).



risk passengers. We strongly support TSA's transition plan to segment and screen passengers differently while they eliminate the practice of using canines.

If there is a silver lining to the 2016 summer experience it would be the collaborative discussions and close daily collaboration amongst government and stakeholders under Administrator Pekoske's leadership. As a result, airlines have worked with TSA and airports to institute best practices. The TSA has also established a National Airport Operations Center that tracks daily screening operations and shifts officers and resources where they are needed most based on passenger volumes. This collaboration is not the exception, it is enshrined in our daily routine and operations and it has significantly elevated our security baseline across the entire system. Coordination and collaboration makes our system more safe and we are now better prepared on a daily basis than we have ever been.

To that end, we would also like to thank Congress for your assistance and attention to TSA's staffing. For instance, we know we will see about four percent growth this summer travel season but through your assistance TSA expects to have an additional 1,600 officers hired and 50 extra canines on board to deal with that anticipated growth. That said, we are interested in understanding TSA's plan for maintaining reasonable throughput if airlines and airports were to no longer supply contract labor support for non-screening functions as this support was intended to temporarily assist during the Summer 2016 crisis.

We must realize though that staffing is just one part of the puzzle. Improving the security process and deploying better technology are critical elements in our continued efforts to ensure a secure system that also improves the passenger experience.

In "assessing the TSA checkpoint", A4A offers the following recommendations to modernize our system:

- Merge TSA Pre✓™ and CBP Global Entry and eliminate the duplication of processes;
- Create a new segment of vetted passengers using third party commercial data that allows for a form of expedited screening;
- Accelerate deployment of Computed Tomography (CT) Technology;
- Allow TSA and CBP to jointly utilize opt-in biometrics to improve security and facilitation;
- Utilize and expand the use of canine teams; and
- Stop the annual practice of diverting passenger security fee revenue.

Merge TSA Pre✓™ and CBP Global Entry and eliminate the duplication of processes. As an industry, we are promoting expedited screening programs, and in



many cases our members are waiving the cost of enrollment for some frequent flyers and providing space at airports to set up walk-up processing stations. Airlines also work collaboratively with TSA on the KCM program, which now processes 250,000+ crewmembers through separate access points. Much work needs to be done however, while we did see significant growth in the number of TSA Pre✓™ enrollees in the aftermath of the summer of 2016, that bump has since leveled off and we are currently not on a path to reach the TSA goal of 25 million enrollees. In order to reach and hopefully exceed that goal, we would specifically recommend that DHS --

- Merge Global Entry and TSA Pre✓™ to create a unified DHS vetting program;
- Fast-track a robust and aggressive marketing campaign through third Party enrollment options;
- Allow mobile enrollment;
- Make the enrollment centers more accessible by adjusting locations and schedules; and
- Consider reducing the enrollment fee for families.

Create a new segment of vetted passengers using third party commercial data that allows for a form of expedited screening. We are eager to work with TSA to create a program that further develops a risk-based approach to screening. Since we are limited by space at the airport, we need to find ways to make better use of existing space. If we believe that 99% of the traveling public are lower risk, we should begin to segment that 99% into categories to provide a different level of screening based on vetting. For now, those willing to opt-in to a background check through fingerprints are admitted into TSA Pre✓™. Those willing to undergo a different kind of vetting using public and personally supplied data could be put in a different lane with a different level of screening than either TSA Pre✓™ or the passengers about whom nothing is known.

Accelerate deployment of CT Technology. Last year, the TSA implemented measures to address concerns about new, intelligence-backed threats concealed in personal electronic devices (PEDs). Those measures, requiring greater passenger divestiture, have created longer passenger lines at some checkpoints. While we applaud TSA's responsiveness to the threat, we ultimately believe greater investment in technology must be prioritized so that TSA can both improve its threat detection capabilities, optimize staffing performance, and maintain passenger throughput at reasonable levels.

We are particularly enthusiastic about TSA's testing of 3D scanning or CT because of the enhanced detection capabilities and easy upgradability. We believe checkpoint CT will help TSA focus on the threat in real time and will significantly improve screening effectiveness and efficiency.



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We are also encouraged by the support and interest of congressional stakeholders and the serious efforts by TSA to test, enhance, and demonstrate this capability and we applaud the FY18 funding support provided by the Congress to rapidly advance, begin fielding CT, and replace over 2,400 advanced technology X-ray systems. Some of our members have gifted CT units to TSA in an effort to expedite testing and certification of the technology. While this practice isn't sustainable, we believe it shows our commitment to improving our risk-based aviation security framework. We urge the Committee to continue to prioritize the deployment of CT across our aviation system.

Allow TSA and CBP to jointly utilize opt-in biometrics to improve security and facilitation. If TSA and CBP were to jointly advance the adoption of biometric technology for identity management in the airport environment, DHS could both improve security and transform the passenger air travel experience. A unified DHS approach for collecting and utilizing biometric data is critical to enhancing security and leveraging scarce taxpayer and passenger resources. Right now, TSA and CBP are pursuing different biometric solutions with TSA using fingerprints and CBP piloting facial recognition, when we should be pursuing a more harmonized and common sense approach that improves both security and facilitation without putting unnecessary cost burdens on the industry.

Utilize and expand the use of canine teams. The use of canine teams has been a tremendous success in both the passenger and cargo security environment. We would advocate that Congress continue to support and expand the canine program. We also encourage TSA to accelerate their third party canine certification program for cargo and passenger canines.

Stop the annual practice of diverting passenger security fee revenue. U.S. aviation and its customers are subject to 17 federal aviation taxes and 'fees', in addition to standard corporate taxes. In Fiscal Year 2017 alone, special U.S. taxes on airlines and their customers totaled over \$24 billion – more than \$66 million per day. Included within those numbers are revenues that are intended to support activities within the DHS. These 'fees' include the –

- September 11th TSA Passenger Security Fee – a \$5.60 fee imposed per one-way trip on passengers enplaning at U.S. airports with a limit of \$11.20 per round trip; the fee also applies to inbound international passengers making a U.S. connection
- Customs User Fee (CUF) – a \$5.65 fee on passengers arriving in the U.S. from foreign locations to fund inspections by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); passengers arriving from U.S. territories and possessions are exempt



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- Immigration User Fee (IUF) – a \$7.00 fee imposed on passengers arriving in the U.S. from foreign locations to fund inspections performed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

As an industry we have seen an all too common trend of either directly or indirectly diverting the revenue collected from these ‘fees’ toward deficit reduction or other sectors of the government. For instance, starting in 2001 the TSA passenger security fee had been limited to \$2.50 per passenger enplanement with a maximum fee of \$5.00 per one-way trip. However, starting in July 2014, pursuant to the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, the fee was restructured into a single per-trip charge and increased to \$5.60 per one-way trip. That increase, over the 10-year period from Fiscal Years 2014-2023, is projected to raise \$40 billion with \$13 billion for deficit reduction. Subsequently, this diversion practice was continued and extended in both the 2015 Highway bill (P.L. 114-41) and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. Specifically, these laws have already diverted or will divert –

- \$390,000,000 for fiscal year 2014;
- \$1,190,000,000 for fiscal year 2015;
- \$1,250,000,000 for fiscal year 2016;
- \$1,280,000,000 for fiscal year 2017;
- \$1,320,000,000 for fiscal year 2018;
- \$1,360,000,000 for fiscal year 2019;
- \$1,400,000,000 for fiscal year 2020;
- \$1,440,000,000 for fiscal year 2021;
- \$1,480,000,000 for fiscal year 2022;
- \$1,520,000,000 for fiscal year 2023;
- \$1,560,000,000 for fiscal year 2024;
- \$1,600,000,000 for fiscal year 2025
- \$1,640,000,000 for fiscal year 2026; and
- \$1,680,000,000 for fiscal year 2027.

Airlines and their customers now pay \$1.6 billion more in TSA security fees —\$3.9 billion (2017) vs. \$2.3 billion (2013)—for the exact same service. A similar story can be told in regards to customs user fees. The concept of a ‘fee’ specifically charged to pay for a specific service has long been lost in our industry and they have all simply become taxes by another name.

We would respectfully request this Committee do everything in its power to redirect TSA passenger security fee revenue back where it belongs: paying for aviation security. These diverted funds could go a long way to not only expanding enrollment in TSA Pre ✓™ but also deploying critical technology like CT.



Importance of Commercial Aviation Sector. Airlines crisscross the country and globe every day carrying passengers and cargo safely and securely to their destinations and is an integral part of the economy. In 2014, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), economic activity in the U.S. attributed to commercial aviation-related goods and services totaled \$1.54 trillion, generating 10.2 million jobs with \$427 billion in earnings. As of December 2016 our industry directly employed nearly 700,000 workers and contributes 5% of our nation's GDP.

These facts underscore what is at stake and why we need to approach aviation security in a smart, effective and efficient manner and make sure we get it right. The daily collaboration and communication between TSA and stakeholders will play a vital role toward that goal and programs like TSA Pre✓™ are essential to our risk-based security system being successful.

Thank you, on behalf of our member companies, we appreciate the opportunity to testify.