

AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSPORTATION
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S FISCAL YEAR
2025 BUDGET

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND MARITIME
SECURITY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
MARITIME SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:40 p.m., in room 310, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Carlos A. Gimenez [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Gimenez, LaLota, Thanedar, and Kennedy.

Also present: Representative Carter.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security will come to order. Without objection, the Chair may declare the subcommittee in recess at any point.

The purpose of this hearing is to examine the priorities of TSA's budget request for fiscal year 2025. I would like to thank our distinguished witness, Administrator David Pekoske, for joining us today.

Without objection, the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Carter, is permitted to sit with the subcommittee and ask questions of the witnesses. So ordered.

I also want to welcome a new Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Kennedy. Thank you for joining us.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

On behalf of the Members of our subcommittee, I am pleased to welcome Administrator Pekoske to discuss TSA's fiscal year 2025 budget request.

It has been over 2 decades since TSA's establishment after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. While TSA has grown and evolved as an agency, its mandate from the American people remains the same, to safeguard our transportation system.

From freight rail, trucking, and pipelines to commercial aviation, TSA leads the Nation's efforts in facilitating the safe and free movement of people and goods throughout the United States and its transportation systems. We know our economy depends on this to succeed and remain competitive around the world.

Throughout this last year, this subcommittee has conducted hearings on issues ranging from TSA's modernization efforts, to the

role of technology in aviation security, to TSA's identity management work. This has been important work that gives us a better understanding of where TSA stands today.

To carry out its mission, TSA needs the technology and the manpower to stay ahead of the quickly-evolving threat landscape and to keep commerce flowing freely.

We recognize that manpower continues to be an issue, and this subcommittee is committed to working with TSA to ensure that their front-line workers receive an equitable, competitive wage.

While more work needs to be done to ensure the long-term viability of TSA's new pay plan, the increasing employee retention rates are an encouraging sign. I'm confident that TSA's leadership will continue to be an engaged, effective partner with this committee in addressing manpower issues.

I am less confident, however, in TSA's development and deployment of new technology. Last year, I raised concerns with the painfully slow time lines for TSA's rollout of the new Computed Tomography systems, and the second generation of Credential Authentication Technology at TSA checkpoints across the country.

These are estimated to be completed in fiscal years 2042 and 2049, respectively. That is simply unacceptable. One year later, I am still concerned that the agency has not made enough strides to expedite the rollouts of these critical new technologies.

In fact, when examining the budget request, it appears that technology has taken a back seat. I am concerned that TSA has not requested enough for technology. TSA procurement budget request for fiscal year 2025 is over \$40 million less than what Congress enacted in fiscal year 2023, and the research and development request for this fiscal year was barely half the size of the agency's R&D budget in fiscal year 2023.

I understand the agency is also including a request to end the diversion of the passenger security fee, which would help the agency account for some of these changes. I am firmly against the diversion and recognize the need for Congress to engage this issue more thoughtfully, an end to the bait-and-switch that is currently happening. Simply put, the American people pay \$5.60 per flight for security. All of it should go to security.

Despite these challenges, I am pleased that TSA is making tremendous progress with digital IDs. Through partnerships with States and global tech leaders, such as Apple and Google, TSA is working to integrate mobile driver licenses and other forms of digital identification into their security screening process.

TSA's work on identity management is making the security process safer, more efficient, and ultimately less intrusive to individual passengers. I am proud that the agency is now the de facto leader within the Federal Government in this space.

As passenger volumes at airports continue to increase, the role of technology is even more important to ensure checkpoints are operating efficiently and that passengers have plenty of time to make their flights. This is not the time to lose focus on technology.

In closing, the transportation sector needs an engaged, effective TSA to ensure the free flow of goods, people, and services across the country and around the world.

Administrator Pekoske, my colleagues and I stand ready to work with you to fulfill your mandate to the American people. I appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony.
[The statement of Chairman Gimenez follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CARLOS A. GIMENEZ

MAY 15, 2024

On behalf of the Members of our subcommittee, I am pleased to welcome Administrator Pekoske to discuss TSA's fiscal year 2025 budget request.

It has been over 2 decades since TSA's establishment after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

While TSA has grown and evolved as an agency, its mandate from the American people remains the same: to safeguard our transportation sector.

From freight rail, trucking, and pipelines to commercial aviation, TSA leads the Nation's efforts in facilitating the safe and free movement of people and goods through the United States' transportation systems. We know our economy depends on this to succeed and remain competitive around the world.

Throughout this last year, this subcommittee has conducted hearings on issues ranging from TSA's modernization efforts, to the role of technology in aviation security, to TSA's identity management work. This has been important work that gives us a better understanding of where TSA stands today.

To carry out its mission, TSA needs the technology and manpower to stay ahead of the quickly-evolving threat landscape and keep commerce flowing freely.

We recognize that manpower continues to be an issue and this subcommittee is committed to working with TSA to ensure that their front-line workers receive an equitable, competitive wage.

While more work needs to be done to ensure the long-term viability of TSA's new pay plan, the increasing employee retention rates are an encouraging sign.

I am confident that TSA's leadership will continue to be an engaged, effective partner with this committee in addressing manpower issues.

I am less confident, however, in TSA's development and deployment of new technology.

Last year, I raised concern with the painfully slow time lines for TSA's roll-out of the new computed tomography systems and the second generation of credential authentication technology at TSA checkpoints across the country. These are estimated to be complete in fiscal years 2042 and 2049 respectively. This is simply unacceptable.

One year later, I am still concerned that the agency has not made enough strides to expedite the roll-outs of these critical new technologies.

In fact, when examining the budget request, it appears that technology has taken a back seat. I am concerned that TSA has not requested enough for technology.

TSA's procurement budget request for fiscal year 2025 is over \$40 million less than what Congress enacted in fiscal year 2023, and the research and development request for this fiscal year was barely half the size of the agency's R&D budget in fiscal year 2023.

I understand the agency is also including a request to end the diversion of the Passenger Security Fee, which would help the agency account for some of these changes. I am firmly against the diversion and recognize the need for Congress to engage this issue more thoughtfully and end the "bait-and-switch" that is currently happening.

Simply put: the American people pay \$5.60 per flight for security—all of it should go to security.

Despite these challenges, I am pleased that TSA is making tremendous progress with digital IDs.

Through partnerships with States and global tech leaders such as Apple and Google, TSA is working to integrate mobile driver licenses and other forms of digital identification into their security screening process.

TSA's work on identity management is making the security process safer, more efficient, and ultimately less intrusive to individual passengers. I am proud that the agency is now the de-facto leader within the Federal Government in this space.

As passenger volumes at airports continue to increase, the role of technology is even more important to ensure checkpoints are operating efficiently and that passengers have plenty of time to make their flights.

This is not the time to lose focus on technology.

In closing, the transportation sector needs an engaged, effective TSA to ensure the free flow of goods, people, and services across the country and around the world. Administrator Pekoske, my colleagues and I stand ready to work with you to fulfill your mandate to the American people.

I appreciate you being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. GIMENEZ. I now recognize the Ranking Member, the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Thanedar, for his opening statement.

Mr. THANEDAR. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Gimenez, for calling today's hearing.

Before I begin, I want to welcome Congressman Kennedy to his first hearing as a Member of our subcommittee. Welcome. I look forward to working with you.

I also want to thank Administrator Pekoske for joining us to discuss TSA's budget request for fiscal year 2025. Last year, TSA faced a major funding shortfall as the agency sought more than \$1 billion increase to pay for salary raises and expanded collective bargaining rights.

I strongly supported that effort, and I was glad that we in Congress were able to fulfill TSA's request and fund critical improvements for the workforce.

For fiscal year 2025, to continue these workforce initiatives, TSA has asked and has requested a \$377 million increase for periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions, which will keep TSA employees in line with other Federal workers.

It is critical that Congress continues its efforts and its support for TSA's new pay system, which is having a significant positive impact. Pay raises are making an enormous difference in the lives of Transportation Security Officers, Federal air marshals, and other TSA employees across the country. They are also helping TSA address high rates of attrition, which have plagued the agency for years and have now fallen nearly in half.

Tomorrow, TSA and the union representing the TSO workforce, the American Federation of Government Employees, will formalize a new collective bargaining agreement that will provide additional benefits for the agency and its workforce.

I look forward to hearing more from the administrator about the impact these workforce initiatives are having on TSA's ability to carry out its security mission.

I also hope to hear more about the difficult choices TSA has made to determine funding priorities. TSA's budget request does not include funding for the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or VIPR program, which is critical to surface transportation security.

The request also does not include funding for law enforcement officer and canine reimbursement programs, which airports rely on to help with security costs.

In addition, the request includes approximately \$90 million for Computed Tomography carry-on baggage screening machines, representing an increase from fiscal year 2024 funding, but still not enough to allow the program to deploy machines to all screening checkpoints on a reasonable time frame.

I hope that Congress will be able to restore and increase funding for these programs. Doing so will require creative solutions. As it stands, TSA's budget request assumes that Congress will be able

to redirect to TSA \$1.6 billion in passenger security fee collections, which are slated for diversion to the general Treasury.

In fiscal year 2024, Congress returned \$800 million in fees, but doing so required an extension of sequestration cuts to mandatory spending programs in fiscal 2032. Returning twice the fee in fiscal 2025 would require twice as large an offset.

To go beyond TSA's budget request and restoring funding to key programs, Congress should also consider a modest increase to passenger security fees. I am proud to cosponsor Ranking Member Thompson's bill, the Fund the TSA Act, which would end the diversion of passenger security fees and raise fees by \$2 per trip to provide TSA with the resources it desperately needs. I encourage my colleagues to give the bill serious consideration as a solution to TSA's funding challenges.

I look forward to today's discussion, and Mr. Chair, I yield back.
[The statement of Ranking Member Thanedar follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SHRI THANEDAR

MAY 15, 2024

I want to thank Administrator Pekoske for joining us to discuss TSA's budget request for fiscal year 2025. Last year, TSA faced a major funding shortfall, as the agency sought more than a \$1 billion increase to pay for salary raises and expanded collective bargaining rights. I strongly supported that effort, and I was glad that we in Congress were able to fulfill TSA's request and fund critical improvements for the workforce.

For fiscal year 2025, to continue these workforce initiatives, TSA has requested a \$377 million increase for periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions, which will keep TSA employees in line with other Federal workers. It is critical that Congress continues its support for TSA's new pay system, which is having a significant, positive impact.

Pay raises are making an enormous difference in the lives of Transportation Security Officers, Federal Air Marshals, and other TSA employees across the country. They are also helping TSA address high rates of attrition, which have plagued the agency for years and have now fallen nearly in half.

Tomorrow, TSA and the union representing the TSO workforce, the American Federation of Government Employees, will formalize a new collective bargaining agreement that will provide additional benefits for the agency and its workforce. I look forward to hearing more from the administrator about the impact these workforce initiatives are having on TSA's ability to carry out its security mission.

I also hope to hear more about the difficult choices TSA has made to determine funding priorities. TSA's budget request does not include funding for the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or "VIPR" program, which is critical to surface transportation security. The request also does not include funding for law enforcement officer and canine reimbursement programs which airports rely on to help with security costs.

In addition, the request includes approximately \$90 million for Computed Tomography carry-on baggage screening machines, representing an increase from fiscal year 2024 funding, but still not enough to allow the program to deploy machines to all screening checkpoints on a reasonable time line. I hope that Congress will be able to restore and increase funding for these programs. Doing so will require creative solutions.

As it stands, TSA's budget request assumes that Congress will be able to redirect to TSA \$1.6 billion in passenger security fee collections which are slated for diversion to the General Treasury. In fiscal year 2024, Congress returned \$800 million in fees, but doing so required an extension of sequestration cuts to mandatory spending programs in fiscal year 2032. Returning twice the fees in fiscal year 2025 will require twice as large an offset.

To go beyond TSA's budget request and restore funding to key programs, Congress should also consider a modest increase to passenger security fees. I am proud to cosponsor Ranking Member Thompson's bill, the "Fund the TSA Act," which would end the diversion of passenger security fees and raise fees by \$2 per trip to

provide TSA with the resources it desperately needs. I encourage my colleagues to give the bill serious consideration as a solution to TSA's funding challenges.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you to the Ranking Member, Mr. Thanedar. Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Chairman Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

MAY 15, 2024

Administrator Pekoske has worked closely with Congress to make great strides in expanding workplace rights and critical pay increases for TSA's workers, who have long been left behind.

Last July, 30 percent pay increases hit the paychecks of Transportation Security Officers across the country, finally bringing their pay in line with other Federal workers.

Those raises have driven a dramatic decrease in TSA's attrition rates, providing critical stability to the work force.

Higher pay will enable TSA to keep up with busy summer travel, save money on training new personnel, and increase security by keeping TSOs with seniority and expertise within the agency.

This week marks the next steps forward in advancing TSA's work force initiatives. Yesterday, along with a group of bipartisan cosponsors, I introduced legislation to codify pay improvements and expanded collective bargaining rights for the TSA work force in statute.

Tomorrow, TSA and the American Federation of Government Employees—the union representing the TSO work force—will sign a 7-year collective bargaining agreement, which was negotiated under the expanded framework issued by the administrator.

The agreement will provide additional benefits to the work force and prove that increased opportunities for workers to have a say in their working environment leads to better security outcomes.

TSA's pay raises and new collective bargaining agreement were made possible by the initial, historic funding provided by Democrats in the 2022 omnibus spending bill, and more recently, by the full-year minibus spending bill Congress passed this past March.

TSA's 2025 budget request would carry forward these efforts for another fiscal year.

The request includes a \$377 million increase for pay, which will allow TSA to provide workers the periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions provided to counterparts on the General Schedule wage system.

The request also includes a \$174 million increase to boost staffing levels and allow TSA to continue to screen record volumes of travelers effectively and efficiently.

Now, we must work with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to secure the funding needed to advance these priorities in 2025.

TSA's budget request includes a legislative proposal for authorizing committees to return to TSA the \$1.6 billion in passenger security fee collections slated for diversion in fiscal year 2025.

In 2024, Congress was able to return \$800 million in fees, paid for by extending existing automatic cuts to non-Medicare mandatory spending by an extra year in fiscal year 2032.

We must consider using similar offsets to return fee collections again this year and provide TSA necessary funding.

Even then, TSA will struggle to make ends meet, as the budget request fails to fund several key security programs, including the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or "VIPR," program and the law enforcement officer and canine reimbursement programs.

The request also includes a proposal to end TSA's staffing of airport exit lanes, which Congress has repeatedly rejected, and it provides only minimal funding for next-generation technology procurements.

Congress must consider all possible solutions to address TSA's funding challenges, including increasing passenger security fees that have remained stagnant for many years, despite inflation and increases in airline ticket prices.

My bill, the Fund the TSA Act, would provide TSA with the resources it needs to invest in its work force, screening technologies, and critical security programs by

enacting a modest increase to passenger fees and indexing future fee amounts to inflation.

I hope this committee will consider this bill at our next mark-up.

I would like to thank Administrator Pekoske for his support for the TSA work force and his work to safeguard travelers.

I look forward to hearing more about his plans for the coming fiscal year and the future of the agency.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Again, I am pleased to have a distinguished witness before us today on this critical topic. I ask that our witness please rise and raise his right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you will give before this Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I do.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you. Please be seated.

Let the record reflect that the witness has answered in the affirmative.

I would now like to formally introduce our witness. David Pekoske is currently serving his second term as the seventh administrator of the Transportation Security Administration. In this capacity, he leads a workforce of over 60,000 employees, and is responsible for the security operations at nearly 444 airports throughout the United States.

Under his leadership, TSA has improved transportation security through close partnerships and alliances, a culture of innovation, and the development of a dedicated workforce.

Prior to his tenure at TSA, he served as the 26th Vice Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, culminating a Coast Guard career that included extensive operational and command experience.

I thank the administrator for being here today, and I recognize Administrator Pekoske for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DAVID P. PEKOSKE, ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Mr. PEKOSKE. Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon.

Before I begin, I'd like to offer my condolences on the recent passing of Congressman Donald Payne, Jr., a Member of the subcommittee. He was a wonderful man and a public servant. On behalf of TSA, I offer our condolences to his family, friends, and to you, his colleagues. He will be missed.

Turning to TSA's budget, I appreciate your support of our recently-enacted fiscal year 2024 appropriation. It fully annualized our new compensation plan, which provides funding to pay TSA employees at the same pay rate as the rest of the Federal Government.

Since this new compensation plan was first implemented less than a year ago, it has had significant positive impacts on TSA. Our retention is up. We have many more candidates pursuing opportunities to serve, and morale has markedly improved, as re-

flected in the highest-ever Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results in TSA's history.

Tomorrow, I will sign a new and expanded collective bargaining agreement, which is also fully supported in the fiscal year 2024 appropriation. The President's fiscal year 2025 request seeks to build upon fiscal year 2024 and recognizes that difficult choices need to be made, considering the funding constraints we face. I believe this budget provides the right balance and will position TSA to remain the agile security agency envisioned when we were established nearly 23 years ago.

Ensuring security of our transportation system requires constant focus, continued investment, and hard work. I would like to recognize and thank our TSA workforce and industry partners in aviation and surface transportation, both domestic and abroad, for their role and contributions in strengthening the security of our transportation system.

This is National Police Week, established by a joint resolution of Congress in 1962, where we pay special recognition to law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

I am grateful for the law enforcement officers of TSA, our FAMS, and criminal investigators, and our law enforcement partners across America for their dedication in protecting our transportation system.

The transportation sector is in the midst of a remarkable recovery from the pandemic. Passenger volumes were up by almost 13 percent in 2023, and this year the growth continues.

There has been 9 percent growth at Miami International, 8 percent in Detroit, 11 percent at Lafayette Regional, 6 percent at JFK, 10 percent in Tampa, and furthermore, LAX and Buffalo Niagara have seen 7 and 14 percent rates of increase in volumes, respectively.

Seven of the 10 busiest days ever in U.S. airports occurred in the last 12 months, and 2 in just the past week. We project that 3.1 million passengers will be screened on some days this coming summer.

Tomorrow, we will hold a press event with our industry partners at LaGuardia Airport, where we will talk about our collective readiness and the strength of our partnership, what will likely be our busiest summer yet.

An important priority in the President's fiscal year 2025 request is continued investment in technology at our security checkpoints across the country. Two on-going technology projects in particular are included in the fiscal year 2025 request. They both improve security effectiveness, efficiency, and the customer experience. The first is our upgrade of checkpoint X-ray technology to Computed Tomography, or CT systems.

At the rate of investment in the fiscal year 2025 request, which is \$90 million, our capital investment plan shows that this project will be complete in 2042, 18 years from now.

Similarly, our upgrade of checkpoint identity verification technology, to include facial recognition, increases performance in this critical first element of checkpoint screening. At the rate of investment in the fiscal year 2025 request, which is \$9 million, our cap-

ital investment plan shows this project will be complete in 2049, 25 years from now.

We have the opportunity to accelerate both projects with additional investment, as TSA has the vendors and processes in place to complete them in this decade, not in the 2040's.

One potential solution to the current budget environment may be the 9/11 passenger security fee. For the past 3 years, the President's budget has been accompanied by a legislative proposal that would end the diversion to deficit reduction of \$1.6 billion per year in 9/11 security fee revenue. The legislative proposal would instead restore all 9/11 fee revenue to aviation security, as originally intended.

The diversion of fee revenue began with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and is due to expire at the end of fiscal year 2027. Ending the fee diversion early in fiscal year 2025 would provide the flexibility to include more funding in the Aviation Security Capital Fund and in our operating accounts, especially additional screener positions, given the passenger growth that we're seeing.

I look forward to working with you to fully enact the President's legislative proposal, end the fee diversion completely, and direct all fee revenue to its intended purpose of aviation security.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Thanedar, Members of the subcommittee, thank you again for your support of TSA. I look forward to your questions and to working with all of you to ensure that TSA has the resources and authorities needed to meet its mission in protecting our Nation's vital transportation system. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pekoske follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID P. PEKOSKE

MAY 15, 2024

OPENING/INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the fiscal year 2025 President's budget request, which includes \$11.8 billion for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored to be here and am grateful for the continued, long-standing, and productive partnership TSA enjoys with this subcommittee, as well as all the support you have provided to the agency over the years.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the subcommittee and Congress for fully annualizing the new compensation system for the entire TSA workforce in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024. It has been my No. 1 priority to bring TSA's workforce compensation levels commensurate with those of our Federal Government counterparts, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is already paying dividends in ways that will have a measurable impact on our mission performance. This compensation system now matches the minimum compensation levels with the General Schedule (GS) pay scale and as reflected in TSA's 2023 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey scores, its implementation has already improved TSA's morale and overall employee satisfaction. TSA's attrition has dropped from nearly 20 percent to roughly 11 percent today, and there has also been a rise in recruiting, hiring, and retention. With improved employee retention, TSA is able to be more selective in hiring, moving from needing to hire over 11,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSO) in 2018 to only needing to hire 9,000 TSOs in 2023, to keep up with attrition and increased passenger volumes. All of these improvements were made possible by your continued support of TSA's workforce and is fundamental to ensuring transportation security.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the superior efforts of the entire TSA workforce and partners from across the spectrum—from private in-

dustry to foreign partners and international organizations, advisory committees, academia, State and local governments, and Federal partners. They have all helped support, strengthen, and increase TSA's collaboration, security, information sharing, and growth in customer experience in the new travel environment.

OVERVIEW OF TSA

Today, within the aviation network, TSA is responsible for the security of over 440 Federalized airports, with screening services forecasted this summer for over 23,000 domestic flights and nearly 2,600 outbound international flights per day. With travel volume rebounding at unprecedented rates, TSA routinely screens more than 2 million passengers, 5 million carry-on bags, and 1.4 million pieces of checked baggage daily for explosives and other dangerous items in many locations across the Nation. Seven of our top 10 busiest days of all time were in 2023, with a record of over 2.9 million passengers. TSA anticipates seeing over 3 million passengers on a single day at some point this year. Even with these rising numbers, the TSA workforce continues to rise to the challenge to meet the mission. I commend them for all their efforts and accomplishments, which I would like to convey now. During fiscal year 2023, TSA:

- Implemented the new compensation system aligning TSA employee salaries with the GS scale for Federal employees.
- Completed negotiations on a new, expanded collective bargaining agreement.
- Screened over 858 million passengers, 484 million checked bags, 1.9 billion carry-on items, and pre-screened approximately 1 billion passengers through Secure Flight. TSA also screened a record of over 2.9 million passengers the Sunday after Thanksgiving.
- Reached a cumulative deployment of more than 2,000 Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) machines, with 313 systems added in fiscal year 2023, including second generation, or CAT-2, upgrade kits that enable the use of mobile driver's licenses and utilize optional facial recognition technology to match credentials to the passenger, while protecting their privacy.
- Added 267 Computed Tomography (CT) X-ray scanners that produce high-quality 3-D images, which reduce the need to touch or manually check bags and eliminate the need to take electronics and travel-size liquids, aerosols, and gels out of carry-on bags.
- Updated the detection algorithm to enhance the passenger experience and improve the performance of the nearly 1,000 Advanced Imaging Technology units that safely screen passengers for on-person metallic and non-metallic threats, such as weapons and explosives, without physical contact, significantly reducing false alarms, enhancing accuracy, and reducing the number of necessary pat-downs.
- Expanded digital identity technologies that securely enhance the customer experience, including testing TSA PreCheck touchless identity solutions, and collaborating with Apple, Samsung, Delta, American Airlines, Google, and other private-sector partners to incorporate mobile driver's licenses into security checkpoint operations.
- Prevented a record 6,737 firearms, of which 93 percent were loaded, from getting into sterile areas and aircraft cabins. This was an increase of 195 firearms over fiscal year 2022.
- Responded directly to 3 million traveler questions, typically within 2 minutes, over social media and via text to AskTSA 275-872. The TSA Contact Center answered 2 million traveler calls and emails, and the TSA Cares helpline assisted more than 71,000 travelers with disabilities, medical conditions, and other special circumstances.
- Celebrated the milestone of 18 million active TSA PreCheck members, enrolled a record of 4 million new members, and processed more than 1.6 million renewals. TSA also welcomed 8 new airlines, added a second TSA PreCheck enrollment provider to offer travelers more options, and announced a TSA PreCheck policy change to make it easier for teenagers to accompany enrolled parents or guardians when traveling on the same reservation.
- Provided inflight security on thousands of flights and trained over 5,000 air carrier crew members in self-defense.
- Hired more than 9,000 new TSOs and Security Support Assistants. TSA also trained front-line employees at the new state-of-the-art TSA Academy West at Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada, and TSA Academy East in Glynnco, Georgia, where the 100,000th TSO graduated last September.
- Continued to remain deeply engaged on the evolving cyber threat. TSA issued regulatory policy in both aviation and surface domains to mitigate the cyber

threat and build cyber resiliency. This effort was bolstered by TSA's Intelligence and Analysis, who provided close to 100 cyber-threat focused briefings to internal and external stakeholders.

- TSA also maintained responsibility for surface transportation security, which is vast and purposefully open and public in nature. The surface transportation system includes:
 - *Mass transit and passenger rail.*—Approximately 6,800 local transit providers serving more than 34 million riders daily.
 - *Freight rail.*—Over 570,600 individual freight railroads, including nearly 140,000 miles of rail and more than 1.6 million freight cars handling almost 28 million carloads of vital raw materials and finished products each year.
 - *Highway and motor carrier.*—1.5 million carriers, over 1,800 over-the-road bus companies, more than 1.8 million trucking companies, and approximately 500,000 school buses transporting nearly 25 million students each day.
 - *Pipelines.*—More than 3.3 million miles of pipeline, transporting over 60 percent of the U.S. energy commodities including natural gas, and crude and refined petroleum.

TSA PRIORITIES—VISION/STRATEGY/FUTURE GOALS

As you know, TSA was established by the Aviation and Transportation Security Act in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States, and was charged with the singular mission of preventing another large-scale act of terrorism on the American transportation system. Since that day, TSA has remained steadfast in a commitment to provide the highest level of security across all modes of transportation and work with partners to stay ahead of evolving threats.

In the years since 9/11, TSA has not only had to address the ever-present physical threats to aviation, but also dynamic and emerging cybersecurity threats to our Nation's aviation, rail, hazardous liquid, and natural gas pipeline infrastructure. TSA works closely with the transportation industry to provide nimble and responsive security across all modes of transportation through passenger and cargo screening, vetting and credentialing personnel in critical transportation sectors, law enforcement, regulatory compliance, structured oversight and exercise programs, and international cooperation. TSA has also been entrusted with the REAL ID program, formerly housed within Department of Homeland Security Headquarters and is working to implement the regulations based on the REAL ID Act of 2005. TSA is maximizing engagement with the public, licensing jurisdictions and States, while fully focused on facilitating a smooth transition to full enforcement beginning May 7, 2025.

TSA's vision is to remain an agile, world-class security agency embodied by a professional workforce that engages transportation security partners and the traveling public to outmatch dynamic threats. To accomplish this, TSA has implemented a comprehensive governance framework that establishes a clear decision-making structure, enabling us to address current and future threats. TSA sets agency goals via an end-to-end risk-based, strategic planning process. That is why early within my first term as administrator, TSA collaborated with stakeholders across the transportation system to develop the 2018–2026 TSA Strategy, an 8-year plan highlighting the 3 key priorities necessary to fulfill TSA's mission:

- (1) Improve Security and Safeguard the Transportation System;
- (2) Accelerate Action; and
- (3) Commit to Our People. This strategy will guide us through TSA's 25th anniversary and be used to further strengthen the relationship between TSA and those we serve.

To support the TSA Strategy, as well as emphasize and reinforce accountability, I have issued subsequent execution plans called the Administrator's Intent. The documents describe short- and medium-term objectives to advance TSA toward our strategic priorities. In July 2023, I published the third edition of the Administrator's Intent. This focuses on 20 critical issues involving people, partnerships, and technology, that continues to build on TSA successes. Furthermore, TSA develops Roadmaps, aligned with the Administrator's Intent, on specific cross-cutting and emerging topics. Roadmaps articulate TSA's vision for approaching these critical areas and enable us to work together more effectively with employees and external partners to achieve shared goals and objectives. Currently, TSA has Roadmaps for Cybersecurity, Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS), Insider Threat, Open Architecture, Air Cargo Security, Checked Baggage, Identity Management, and Biometrics. This collection of strategic documents not only guides TSA in its policy and budg-

etary decisions, but also serves as a way for Congress and the public to hold us accountable as good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

These comprehensive strategic planning activities inform TSA's multi-year budget planning process and Capital Investment Plan. TSA publishes its Capital Investment Plan annually and it serves as the guide for determining and prioritizing future investments critical to mission success. Last year, as directed by Congress, TSA delivered its first unconstrained Capital Investment Plan that describes an ideal future state in which TSA is able to mitigate risk to the transportation sector with additional resources. It is imperative that TSA continues to invest in, acquire, and field new technologies to strengthen transportation security.

TSA's level of success is influenced by the help of Congress, as well as our professional, vigilant, and engaged workforce. That is why "Commit to Our People" is one of TSA's 3 strategic priorities. The funding the committee provided in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 allows for that continued commitment. The fiscal year 2025 President's budget request includes the necessary resources to continue this commitment, including \$377 million to annualize TSA's compensation plan adjustment.

The strategic priority of "Commit to Our People" also entails ensuring that TSA provides the workforce with necessary advanced technology to be successful. Evolving threats require an adaptable and responsive TSA; therefore, it is vitally important that we equip our people with the tools they need to combat these threats. To that end, the fiscal year 2025 President's budget includes \$89.6 million and \$9.3 million to procure additional systems within the Checkpoint Property Screening System (CPSS) and CAT programs. These resources will address capability gaps to detect new and evolving threats to civil aviation in current property screening technology reliably and efficiently, all while improving the customer experience.

As of today, TSA needs a total of 3,585 CAT and 2,263 CT machines to reach full operational capability (FOC). Currently, CPSS procurements are an estimated 40 percent of FOC, which puts deployments at approximately 35 percent for CPSS and 57 percent for CAT. Based on past, present, and current projected funding, TSA will meet FOC for CAT machines in fiscal year 2049 and CPSS in fiscal year 2042, respectively. These time lines can improve, with your continued support, as TSA has the vendors, contracts, and processes in place to significantly reduce the time to achieve FOC. Full and dedicated funding for CPSS and CAT are imperative for the Nation's security at airport checkpoints.

The TSA workforce consistently performs a critical national and homeland security function and the employees have done a tremendous job being diligent by monitoring the threats at these checkpoints. Here are some examples of outstanding performances: At Miami International Airport, TSO Stephane Colin was operating the X-ray machine when he discovered multiple prohibitive items. These prohibitive items included 20 brass knuckles, 29 pepper spray canisters, and 30 stun guns. TSA staff at Detroit Metro Airport, identified a suspicious item in a checked bag; TSO Reggie Edwards and Transportation Security Specialist for Explosives James Bucher reviewed and confirmed the item to be an inert grenade. At Lafayette Regional Airport, LTSO Jeff Camille discovered loaded firearm in a passenger carry-on backpack. During the first 2 quarters of fiscal year 2024, Federal Air Marshals, through their participation in law enforcement task forces, were instrumental in the arrests of over 200 individuals in the transportation domain. There are many more examples that reflect the accomplishments of our professional and vigilant workforce.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET REQUEST HIGHLIGHTS

Looking forward into the next year, the fiscal year 2025 President's budget builds upon the resources provided for in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024, and continues funding for TSA's No. 1 priority, the new compensation system. This will enable continued investment in TSA's front-line workforce, while also supporting continued innovation in technology to remain ahead of emerging threats, and resources that help maintain and strengthen partnerships to continue raising security standards. With appreciation to Congress for providing the largest necessary increases for the compensation plan in fiscal year 2024, the budget request includes \$377 million to account for periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions, similar to our GS counterparts, and supports a continued commitment to the entire TSA workforce. The request includes \$174 million in additional resources to support increased passenger volume for both fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025 through increases in the screening workforce along with other volume-dependent requirements, such as staffing for vetting programs and support for Federal Security Director staffs.

The budget request advances cybersecurity efforts in the transportation sector and continues procurement and deployment of CT and CAT at \$99 million, along with a request of \$18 million to drive innovation through on-going research and development with TSA's partners. The budget balances growth and advancement with tough choices. This includes moderate growth in technology acquisitions and research and development of new technologies, continues to propose the elimination of exit lane staffing by TSOs at \$111 million, and finds efficiencies in staffing, contracts, and travel for a total of \$105 million. The budget also proposes the elimination of the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response program of \$68 million, which removes a surge capacity to protect airports and surface transportation systems. TSA's FAMS will continue to work with DHS, local law enforcement, and stakeholders to help mitigate additional risk to the transportation system. Last, I look forward to continuing to work with you as to how we may end the diversion of the Aviation Passenger Security Fee to deficit reduction, restoring those funds to provide for the true purpose of aviation security.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the fiscal year 2025 President's budget request aligns with TSA's strategy to improve security and safeguard the Nation's transportation system, accelerate action, and reinforce TSA's commitment to advancing its mission. Thanks again to Congress for supporting TSA through the fiscal year 2024 appropriations process. The fiscal year 2025 President's budget request honors commitments to TSA's workforce by providing appropriate compensation and other benefits, while addressing capability gaps to ensure that the Nation's transportation security remains the safest in the world.

Securing our Nation's transportation system is a complex task that requires robust partnerships and a well-trained, dedicated workforce. To achieve this goal and the priorities reflected within the fiscal year 2025 President's budget request, TSA will continue to engage with industry and stakeholders, invest resources in employees and technology, and encourage the public to be part of the solution. Finally, through constructive oversight and dialog, TSA seeks a continued partnership with Congress as we work to secure all modes of transportation.

Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I strongly believe that the TSA priorities outlined in the fiscal year 2025 President's budget request are not only necessary but also vital to the economy. As always, TSA will be very responsive in addressing any questions that you might have throughout this budget process, and I look forward to this discussion and your questions. Thank you.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you, Administrator.

Members will be recognized by order of seniority for their 5 minutes of questioning, and I recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Administrator Pekoske, you just said that the authorization to divert the passenger fee ends in 2027. When you make your estimates of 2042 and 2049, is that assuming that that diversion will continue past 2027?

Mr. PEKOSKE. No, sir. It assumes that the diversion will continue as planned, and that's why it's out so far. If the diversion were to end, it would be completed much quicker.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. Could you give me a time table. If the diversion ends in 2027, then how much quicker can you implement the new technologies?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Well, if the diversion ends in 2025 rather than 2027.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. No, I said 2027. Your authorization ends in 2027.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Right.

Mr. GIMENEZ. So assume that it ends in 2027. How much quicker can you get it done?

Mr. PEKOSKE. If it ends in 2027, we could get the identity verification project done in 2033, and we could get the Computed Tomography, or the X-ray project, done in 2032.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. If we end it now, then you can do it within this decade. So you'll accelerate it by a couple years?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Yeah.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK, fair enough.

How do we compare with other countries? In other words, leading-edge, not companies, but countries around the world? Have you gone around and watched what they're doing, what they're planning to do?

If we don't invest more in technology, are we going to fall behind those countries in the ability to protect the American passenger?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, I think we'll fall behind to a degree. I mean, the biggest difference is the United States has 430 airports in its system. No other country has that number of airports.

From my perspective, it's important that this Computed Tomography and this identity verification technology and the on-person screening technology be in every airport, because as you know, if you enter an airport, you're in our system overall.

So we have a challenge of scale that other countries don't have. There are some countries that are investing heavily in this technology, but there are many others that are not yet there. But we've been working hard to kind-of bring the baseline of global aviation security up with these technology advances.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Well, let's talk about Western Europe, you know, France, Germany, Great Britain in particular, OK? Probably Germany and Great Britain, OK?

Are they doing something different than we are? Are they going to use the same technology that we are? They're looking at something else? Also, what is their time table for implementing these new technologies?

Mr. PEKOSKE. For some countries, the time table is much faster than ours, because the airports purchase the technology rather than their federal government, their central government.

We are all looking at the same technology. We all recognize around the globe that Computed Tomography is the technology of the present and the future. It's got a great deal of future potential out 20 or 30 years.

The key challenge that's in front of all of us right now is an attempt to align standards of technology performance, and we've made a lot of good progress on that, particularly with the European Civil Aviation Conference.

Mr. GIMENEZ. So in those countries then the individual airports, those airport authorities, et cetera, they're tasked with acquiring the technology that their TSAs require. It's not the TSA itself?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. What happens is the Civil Aviation Authority in those countries establishes the standards of technology performance and then works with the airports to establish a time line for when they can come in compliance with that, and also predicates some passenger convenience issues with the acquisition of that technology.

For example, with CT technology, you can permit larger volumes of liquids. So that needs to be predicated, of course, on having CT in place.

The other thing that I would add is, as you know, we're working on a one-stop security prototype that hopefully will kick off in the next several months. Part of our requirement and our partner's requirement—so it's bidirectional—is that we both have CT technology and technology that's performing at the same level in terms of their software packages.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Now, wouldn't that also work in the United States, that we develop the standards, et cetera, and then have each individual airport have to abide by those standards, and then they would have to purchase those—that equipment themselves?

That could work here in the United States. I was thinking about that. Maybe we're looking about this the wrong way. We should be actually divvying it up amongst the 440 airports and tell them, Hey, you have to have this by this date, and then they'll have it.

Could we work it that way? I think we could.

Mr. PEKOSKE. You could. I would submit, though, that the way we're doing it centrally is probably much more efficient, because we're a big buyer, and we can influence the—

Mr. GIMENEZ. Well, we could set up the system. We can say, these are the—this is what you have to buy and here through this contract, all right? So you'd still have that economy of scale, but it wouldn't be on the Federal Government to actually fund every single piece of equipment.

You could probably get it done quicker, because if we say, you got to do that within 2 years, they may be able to do it. I don't know that manufacturing has the capacity, but there's another way.

There's different ways to skin this cat, all right? So I'm intrigued by the European model, and maybe we can talk about that a little bit more.

My time is up. I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Thanedar.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Chairman Gimenez. Thank you, Administrator, for your testimony, and thank you for your partnership in advocating for pay raises for TSA employees.

As I travel, I get a chance to meet with the hard-working men and women of TSA, and I clearly visibly see a difference in those hard-working officers.

I believe the new pay system represents a sea change for TSA and provides it with more stable footing to mature as an agency. I understand that attrition rates have dropped nearly in half since pay raises were announced.

What impact does the drop-in attrition rates have on TSA's day-to-day operation, and how does it impact the culture of the agency?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you, sir. You're right. I mean, our attrition rates have dropped by 50 percent. We had, in the last month, our lowest attrition rate ever for the overall TSA work force was 7.8 percent. We were up in the twenties—

Mr. THANEDAR. Yes.

Mr. PEKOSKE [continuing]. For a period of time. So it's a sea change with respect to attrition.

We're also seeing a very significant change. When we open up jobs for competition, we see far more people applying for those jobs than occurred in the last 5 years. So lower attrition, more applicants for open positions. Then, as I mentioned in the opening statement, we have this survey that every Federal agency fills out every year. It's the same year after year, so it's very easy to make very good comparisons. Highest FEV scores ever in our history over this past year.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. Thank you, and I appreciate that. TSA's new pay system also provides improved career ladder opportunities.

What are some of those opportunities, and how will they continue to drive improvements for the agency in years to come?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, the career ladder opportunities are critically important for career development, and critically important for us to increase the average level of experience in our checkpoint operation so that it's higher than what it was a year ago.

So the way we work it is, if somebody is new to TSA, comes in and starts out at a certain pay band, the pay ladder provides automatic promotions after a year to the next higher pay band.

So it provides a very significant incentive for people to progress forward and to stay with the agency. Statistically, we know that if we have an employee that stays for longer than a year, they're much more likely to stay for 5. If they stay for 5, they're much more likely to stay for a full career. We pattern these ladder programs after other agencies and, in particular, our pattern was after Customs and Border Protection, which has been very successful in retaining employees.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. Thank you. I understand tomorrow you will be in New York formalizing the new collective bargaining agreement. I'm just excited. I wanted to join you, but I have work to do here in the District of Columbia. But I'm really excited and I, you know, congratulate you for that success.

Changing subject here, since the ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline in May 2021, TSA has issued a series of cybersecurity requirements for transportation system owners and operators across various modes of transportation, from pipelines to mass transit and rail to aviation.

As industry partners work to implement these requirements, and TSA works to develop them into full rulemaking, TSA must have the resources and expertise necessary to understand industry operations, engage with stakeholders, develop well-informed policies, and inspect the regulatory compliance.

Mr. Administrator, what cybersecurity investment does TSA require, in terms of both funding and personnel, and also, what has TSA done to assess its cybersecurity resource and personnel needs?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you for the question, sir. We've done an awful lot with respect to asking for additional funds for cybersecurity resources. We have roughly 200 people now within the agency.

So if you think of where we were back in let's say 2021, when Colonial Pipeline first occurred, we've made significant progress. One of the things we found is, we don't have a shortage of candidates wanting to work in the Federal Government for however long to help us with our cybersecurity efforts.

We have in the fiscal year 2024 request which was funded a bit of an increase, in fiscal year 2025 another increase. The increases, though, are constrained by our top-line capability.

We certainly like to have more, because we have a significant responsibility to go out and work with our industry partners. I mean, we regulate pipeline systems, rail systems, airlines, and airports. So it's a big swathe of the transportation sector, and a bigger inspection workforce would really help us out.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. Thank you for your answer.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize the newest Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you very much.

Administrator Pekoske, it's a pleasure to meet you.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Likewise.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you for your service.

Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for the kind words. Happy to be a part of this wonderful committee. I was reminded earlier in the Homeland Security Committee meeting as a full that this committee began out of New York and the horrific terrorist attacks of 9/11.

I know our work continues each and every day to secure our country and our travelers and the airports and the ports and the bridges and the freight and the railways.

So thank you, No. 1, for your service. I also want to thank the workforce. I see there's a number of folks that have joined you here today, TSA officers. We are grateful to the workers that keep our travelers moving and safe and our economy moving all at the same time.

I'm excited about the fact that you'll be at LaGuardia tomorrow to sign the collective bargaining agreement, the first in quite some time, and well-deserved for those workers. It's good for everyone.

On a regular basis as we travel, the traveling public at airports, for starters, see those officers laboring to move people through security. Depending on what time of day and what airport you're at, the line could be extraordinarily long, and the workforce could be extraordinarily overtaxed and overburdened, depending on how many people are working.

I'm sure they can tell you better than I can that the travelers come in waves. We've seen it. It's a regular occurrence, again, depending on what hub you're at at any particular time.

What sort of guardrails do you have in place as an organization to keep the flow moving, to keep the ratio of officers in a good place so that the traveling public is moved through in a decisive manner as well as ensuring that those that are traveling are screened effectively?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, thank you for your comments. I'm quite a bit proud of this workforce, of the representatives that are sitting behind me that do the very hard work each and every day to make sure that all of us can travel safely and securely. So I really appreciate your comments.

In terms of things that we're doing, pay was the big issue. That was our No. 1 priority in the fiscal year 2024 budget. Really appre-

ciate this subcommittee, the Appropriations Subcommittee, and the entire Congress supporting us in that regard. We already see—as Mr. Thanedar noted, we already see the benefits of this, not just in the statistics, but when you visit the checkpoints and you engage with our officers, they feel more valued. They should always feel very valued in what they do.

For me, it's really important that security is our primary focus. As you mentioned, 9/11, our job is on our watch not to ever have a repeat of a terrorist attack on our system. So, we emphasize security effectiveness each and every day.

But importantly, and we talked a little bit about this in all of our opening statements, it's important to give our officers the tools that they need to do this job.

It's not easy, if you're looking at an X-ray image, and you're looking at hundreds of X-ray images in a given shift, to be able to find some very small items that might represent a hazard to people that are flying.

We had, over the past year, detected over 6,700 firearms in accessible property and carry-on bags, for example. So we have a keen focus on making sure that we put the technology tools in place.

But I also think what's very important, and I know the officers behind me would agree, is that we work very hard to make sure we have a workplace culture that's positive, that's focused on career development of helping each individual officer out so that they can realize their own personal expectations of service and be able to provide that to the passengers we see.

You know, what I think about all the time is, I can't name another Federal agency that has direct contact with on a daily basis 2.5, 2.6 million people, and represents the Federal Government, represents the United States, represents the TSA to all those travelers.

So I'm very proud of the work they do and incredibly focused on making sure that—my policy is people first. We are a 62,000-person organization. We don't run if we don't place people first. I think that our folks are doing an incredible job, so I appreciate your comments.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields. The gentleman's time is up.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Carter.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for allowing me to waive on to be here. Thank you very much.

I wish to enter this document from Sheriff Lopinto into the record.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

JOSEPH P. LOPINTO, III SHERIFFSENT VIA E-MAIL

April 29, 2024

Congressman Troy Carter
442 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Carter,

I would like to follow-up my concerns expressed in my April 9, 2024, letter sent to the Louisiana Congressional Delegation and numerous other stakeholders.

In the letter, I expressed my concern the elimination of funding to local law enforcement Explosive Detection Canine Teams ("EDCTs") in the TSA National Explosive Detection Canine Teams Program ("NEDCTP") would negatively impact public safety across our country.

We will see the effects at airports, special events, and local law enforcement's ability to respond to bomb related events within their local communities. To be clear, special events include Superbowl's, World Series, NCAA tournaments, Sugar Bowl, Mardi Gras, political events, dignitary protection, etc. It will affect local law enforcement's ability to respond to bomb related events at schools, malls, festivals, concerts, other large public gatherings and protect public infrastructure.

A quick and adequate response to these events ensures local law enforcement's ability to provide for the public's safety and not impose a burdensome impact on the public's daily life.

Since sending the letter, my office received a new TSA Other Transaction Agreement ("OTA") regarding the NEDCTP. The new OTA includes zero funding to local law enforcement. The prior OTA included the now eliminated \$50,500 per team annual reimbursement.

JOSEPH P. LOPINTO, III SHERIFF



Despite the funding elimination, the new agreement includes an obligation that local law enforcement EDCTs work **eighty percent (80%)** of their on-duty time in the transportation environment. This requires local law enforcement to spend local tax dollars, without federal reimbursement, to assist TSA accomplish **their mission** to *protect the nation's transportation systems*.

In an effort to continue being able to deter, detect, and respond to bomb related events, we asked the TSA to remove the eighty percent (80%) on-duty time local law enforcement obligation from the **unfunded** OTA. However, TSA will not remove the obligation. It remains in place for all EDCTs across our country.

This is not a reasonable response to local law enforcement. This will further contribute to the current shortage of EDCTs by putting local law enforcement in a position to have to eliminate or decrease the size of their EDCTs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or requests for additional information. I may be reached at (504) 363-5725 or via email, Lopinto_JP@jpsa.com.

Sincerely,


Joseph P. Lopinto, III
Sheriff

Gasquet, Josephe J.

From: Bartlett, Timothy <Timothy.Bartlett@tsa.dhs.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2024 4:14 PM
To: Gassenberger, Tara S.; TSA canineFinance; Pollock, Melany
Cc: Bodellini, Marco S.; Palermo, Robert W.; Gasquet, Josephe J.; Woods, Robert E.; St. John, Wade R.
Subject: RE: [Not Virus Scanned] New 2024 Canine LEO Agreement for Signature

**** This email has been received from outside the organization – Think before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding. ****

Hi Tara,

There are no edits allowed with the OTA that was provided. The 80% requirement is still in place with all LEO Canine OTA's that TSA is issuing. This requirement has been in place year after year in our mutual agreement.

Tim

Timothy J Bartlett | Branch Chief
National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program
TSA | Security Operations
6595 Springfield Center Drive | Office 84215 | Springfield, VA 22150
Cell: [312-446-5182](tel:312-446-5182)



From: Gassenberger, Tara S. <gassenberger@jpsso.com>
Date: Thursday, Apr 25, 2024 at 4:39 PM
To: TSA canineFinance <TSA canineFinance@tsa.dhs.gov>, Bartlett, Timothy <Timothy.Bartlett@tsa.dhs.gov>, Pollock, Melany <Melany.Pollock@tsa.dhs.gov>
Cc: Bodellini, Marco S. <Bodellini_ms@jpsso.com>, Palermo, Robert W. <palermo_rw@jpsso.com>, Gasquet, Josephe J. <Gasquet_jj@jpsso.com>, Woods, Robert E. <Woods_re@jpsso.com>, St. John, Wade R. <Stjohn_wr@jpsso.com>
Subject: [Not Virus Scanned] New 2024 Canine LEO Agreement for Signature

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of DHS. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize and/or trust the sender. If you believe this is SPAM or a phishing email, contact the TSA Cyber Security Operations Center at TSA-SPAM.

This message contains a password protected attachment. This attachment could not be scanned for viruses. If you were not expecting this email, please do not open this attachment.
Good afternoon TSA,

Please see attached the 2024 Canine LEO agreement from our legal department that has redlined an edit on bottom of page 3. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to our office.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tara Gassenberger
Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office
Grants/HIDTA
1233 Westbank Expressway
Harvey, LA 70058
gassenberger@jpsos.com
504-363-5740

From: TSACanineFinance <TSACanineFinance@tsa.dhs.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2024 1:42 PM
To: Gassenberger, Tara S. <gassenberger@jpsos.com>; Lopinto III, Joseph P. <Lopinto_jp@jpsos.com>
Cc: Phillips, Joseph <Joseph.Phillips1@tsa.dhs.gov>; Pruitt, James <James.Pruitt@tsa.dhs.gov>; Hamilton, Dennis <Dennis.Hamilton@tsa.dhs.gov>; Bartlett, Timothy <Timothy.Bartlett@tsa.dhs.gov>; Waldron, Mark <Mark.Waldron@tsa.dhs.gov>
Subject: New 2024 Canine LEO Agreement for Signature

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On behalf of the Contracting Office, this email provides the revised 2024 TSA National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program (NEDCTP) OTA. The enacted FY 2024 budget eliminated all stipend funding for Canine LEO participants. As such, the attached OTA and SOJO include changes that eliminate all references to funding and reimbursements. These OTAs will continue through December 31, 2024. During this time, the NEDCTP will continue working closely with the Airport Law Enforcement Agencies Network (ALEAN) representatives and all LEO Participants in making updates to the program requirements with the intention of entering into a new long term OTA beginning on January 1, 2025.

The OTA is password protected. A password will be sent separately.

The new OTA requires endorsement. **Specifically, a signature is required on page 29 of the SOJO. Please reply with the signature page to TSACanineFinance@tsa.dhs.gov** We are requesting that the signature page be returned no later than **May 1st, 2024**.

If you have any questions, please contact the NEDCTP at: TSACanineFinance@tsa.dhs.gov

Thank you for your participation in the Transportation Security Administration- National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program. We truly value our continued partnership in securing our nation's transportation systems.

Thank you,

Timothy Bartlett
Chief- NEDCTP

Mr. CARTER. I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here. Sheriff Lopinto of Louisiana has expressed his concerns about the elimination of funding to the local law enforcement Explosives Detection Canine Teams' Program and how it would negatively impact public safety across the country.

Mr. Administrator, thank you for joining us today. I appreciate my colleagues allowing me to waive on to the subcommittee today, and I want to take this opportunity to discuss what the National Explosive Detection Canine Team Program through TSA, which TSA provides canine and canine training to local law enforcement agencies.

For many years, TSA has also provided law enforcement agencies participating in the program with reimbursement for the costs of housing and taking care of canines. Unfortunately, in TSA's budget request for fiscal years 2024 and 2025, TSA proposed eliminating \$34.1 million in funding for canine reimbursements.

In the fiscal year 2024 minibus appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security, Congress followed through on TSA's proposal and eliminated canine reimbursement funding.

This funding is critical to supporting local law enforcement agencies' canine operation, which deploy to a wide range of environments and provide explosive detection capabilities. Without reimbursements, local agencies may be forced to reduce or eliminate their canine programs.

Mr. Administrator, I certainly recognize that TSA has a tough situation and are in a tough spot, trying to balance competing priorities, especially when given the need to increase pay for TSA employees, which I strongly support.

However, I am worried that elimination of canine reimbursements would degrade the ability of law enforcement's enforcement agencies to respond to threats and security incidents within the transportation environment.

What impact are you seeing so far for the defunding of this program, and have you heard from any local law enforcement agencies what they do in the light of this reduction?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you, Mr. Carter. I appreciate your comments and question. You know, I would echo your sentiment that the National Explosive Detection Canine Program is an extremely valuable program to law enforcement agencies and to TSA as well. It is the biggest explosive detection canine program in the world, about 1,100 canines total.

The reason for the reduction is simply the limited top line that we have. In other words, we don't have enough money to fund everything that we need to do. We have to make some very hard choices whenever that happens.

One of the hard choices was to eliminate the law enforcement canine reimbursement, but what we did not eliminate is all the support we provide for those canines. We source and train the canine. We train the handlers. We offer training in different techniques. We update the explosive odorless, and we do certification processes.

So my conversations with officials like Sheriff Lopinto has been, Listen, this is not something that we want to do. It's something that our budget limitations require us to do. We hope that you don't give up your canines and that you engage with us over the course of the year and renew your agreements with us, which most law enforcement agencies now—

Mr. CARTER. They certainly don't want to, but, as you might imagine, with the fiscal crunch that you face, local governments likewise face them.

But we are constantly faced with pay me now or pay me later scenarios. Something as critical as bomb-sniffing dogs, drug-sniffing dogs, dogs that have the ability to, in a very large swat, save thousands of lives by identifying would-be threats is one of those things that I would implore you, the agency, and others, to reconsider, given the circumstances and the outcome that can happen in the wake of having limited or no access to canine response teams.

As you develop these new agreements, will you work with local law enforcement agencies to understand their needs and impacts of the loss in funding of their operations, and will you consider tailoring each agreement to the needs of law enforcement agencies in question rather than issuing a blanket agreement?

As you know, one size does not fit all. Different agencies in Louisiana particularly. We are Jefferson Parish, particularly stronger than any other, and oftentimes, has to loan their canines to other agencies. This elimination would not only impact the great need at our airports, but also our bus stations and throughout the rest of the State.

So I would really urge that you look at that. I'm also asking, make an impassioned plea to our friends as we work on funding bills for fiscal year 2025. I hope my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee will take a look at the importance of this program and figure out a way to restore the funding. Obviously, having your support in that measure is critically important.

You can count on our support, not only from this committee and Homeland Security more broadly, but also from Members of Congress who recognize. We've seen what happened with 9/11.

We see what's happening in our country every single day with terrorist threats, and you see them far more than ever bubbles up

to the public. This is one of those cases where penny-wise and, perhaps, pound-foolish.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The gentleman's time has expired. I now recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. LaLota.

Mr. LALOTA. The Federal Government's passenger security fee is a total scam. It's \$1 billion bait-and-switch collected off of hard-working American air travelers \$11.20 at a time.

For my constituents and Americans watching at home, in the name of aviation security and 9/11 airport security, you get charged \$5.60 for every one-way trip you take, \$11.20 for a round-trip for every airplane ticket.

Despite the name of the fee collection program, the passenger security fee, over \$1 billion of those funds collected under the guise of more security are diverted to the Treasury for expenditures having absolutely zero to do with passenger security and keeping our skies safe.

It's a bait-and-switch scam perpetrated by our Federal Government and hardworking and unknowing Americans are the victims. To use September 11 to perpetuate the scam is especially offensive, especially for a New Yorker like myself.

As part of the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills, about one-third of the diversion will go back to the Department of Homeland Security. It's a start and it's a step in the right direction, but it's surely not enough. The entire diversion must end, and that revenue should only be utilized by the TSA.

Thank you for being here, sir. I appreciate your input. It's always valued by the committee.

My first question is this: In the absence of the full passenger security fee revenue, and due to its diversion, how has the TSA managed the inherent risks to airport security?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, it's very hard to do that. What you see are technology investments that we know we need to make. We need to have better X-ray technology across every single checkpoint in every airport in the country. We can't do that. We won't get that done until 2042.

The same thing with identity verification. We want to move to facial recognition, digital identities. That should be in every single airport. That's 2049. This is a long, long way off.

You heard Mr. Carter talk about the canine reimbursement program. We can't fund that because our top line is not there. We had to pull back law enforcement. This is Police Week. We had to pull back law enforcement officer reimbursement programs because of top-line constraints.

I agree with you 100 percent. That \$1.6 billion was intended for aviation security. It ought to go to aviation security. When that diversion ends, and I really hope it does, that it increases the top line of TSA by that amount.

Mr. LALOTA. Would our skies be safer if we didn't divert it, the Federal Government did not divert the funds?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Without question.

Mr. LALOTA. Would the travel that Americans have through their airports be more efficient? Would it take less time to get through the security line?

Mr. PEKOSKE. It would, because we could hire more people and we could put better technology in place.

Mr. LALOTA. Great. Thank you for that.

As part of the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bill, the funding for security checkpoint technology was also more than halved, for approximately—from approximately \$80 million to about \$35 million.

Last year, the TSA told this committee that, based on past, present, and current projected funding, it's not until, like you just said, 25 years from now, in 2049, that TSA will meet full operational capability for Credential Authentication Technology machines. Eighteen years from now in 2042, we will meet the standard for checkpoint property screening systems, including Computing Tomography.

That was with more than double the funding that was appropriated in the fiscal year 2024 bill.

Administrator, what does that projection look like now, in your view, sir?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, the programs will probably stay within those same general time frames, 2042, 2043, 2049, maybe 2050, but it's just crazy late. I mean, you know, when you're looking at 20-plus years, that's a long, long time to wait.

I would highlight for you, too, that the CT investment is designed to help us detect very low sizes of explosive critical to the security of the system, and that needs to be done on an accelerated basis.

The other thing I would offer very quickly is our R&D budget was also halved. So, your future capability development is not at the pace that it needs to be at.

Mr. LALOTA. So, in contemplation of the passenger security fee being improperly diverted, if it wasn't diverted and those 2 metrics you provided, not meeting your goals until 2049 and 2042, if those funds were not diverted and they were used for their intended use, what would you say about those time lines? They would not only shift to the left from 2049 and 2042, respectively. About how far would they shift to the left, if you know?

Mr. PEKOSKE. They would shift by about 20 years to the left. I mean, you go from the 2040's into the late 2020's. It would allow us also to do a lot of other things that we just can't even contemplate doing right now with our budget constraints.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you. I have just a few seconds left. I want to say thanks for being here and informing us on these important issues. There seems to be bipartisan interest in getting this right. We've certainly identified the issue.

Now it's a matter of ensuring that we account for not only passenger safety, but the efficiency they go through the airport and plug in holes in our budget. Your testimony today, sir, is invaluable to that, and I want to say thanks.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you, sir, I appreciate your support.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The gentleman's time has expired.

We'll go through a second round. So, I'll be following up on what I ended up with the last time.

What they do in Europe, and what they do in Europe, some Members that weren't here, especially Mr. LaLota, you may want to hear.

It's not the central government that provides the technology at the airports. It's actually the airports themselves, and that the central government actually sets the standards of what they need.

Let me go back to that passenger security fee. When it was originally established, I mean, I can't imagine that all of it goes to technology. What else did it go for?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, it goes to pay. A lot of the development of the programs we have, working with our industry partners to make sure that airports, for example, have security within the airport that is overseen by TSA but not accomplished by TSA.

Mr. GIMENEZ. All right. So if we—now, I'm not going to take much longer on this, but I'd like to see you and talk about the possibility of actually changing our model, that the individual airports actually, you know, provide the technology that we say they need, and that's passed on to the passenger. But somehow, this passenger fee that we have also, that diversion, that ends up going to TSA, or at least a portion of it, or maybe a portion of it goes back to these airports to provide what they need.

But we need to, I think, explore this a little bit more, because I think that these individual airports can probably get their stuff done faster than we can. When they're mandated to do XYZ by a certain time, they'll do it.

The airports generate their own fees, and all the fees that are generated at the airport are supposed to be used at the airport. I know there may be some problem with smaller airports that don't have the volume, but I want to see how they do this in Europe and why they think that's a better model than us.

Sometimes we just may learn something from them that, yeah, maybe it is a better model than what we have right now. We need to accelerate it. I'm with Mr. LaLota all the way.

We need to—if we're saying we're going to charge a fee for a service, then all that money needs to be for that service. If not, it's a classic bait-and-switch of the American people who are thinking they're paying for security when, in fact, they're not. They're paying to balance the budget of the U.S. Government.

Yes, some of it is being used for security, but the majority of it is not. That's not right. So I'll be working with Mr. LaLota and maybe other Members of this committee, subcommittee, to see, OK, what we can do about it.

But the good news is by 2027, it's supposed to end, unless it's reauthorized. I'll tell you this, I'm not reauthorizing it and I don't think any Member of this subcommittee will probably reauthorize it either.

So by 2027, at least you'll get it back. But I'm not so sure that we're the best vehicle for implementing all these security measures. I think these airports need to start picking up part of the load too.

So with that, I'm going to yield the rest of my time back, and I recognize the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Thanedar.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Administrator, earlier this week Ranking Member Thompson reintroduced his bill, The Rights for the TSA Workforce Act of 2024, which would codify better pay, collective bargaining rights, and third-party adverse appeal rights by applying Title V of the

U.S. Code to TSA in statute. Previous versions of this bill passed the House in the 116th and 117th Congress.

This year, for the first time, we introduced a bill with an equal number of Republican and Democratic original cosponsors. I happen to be one of the cosponsors. So we are representing a bipartisan coalition of Members who agree that this is the sensible thing to do for TSA.

Mr. Administrator, do you agree that we should not backtrack on the advancements we have collectively made for the TSA workforce, and should, instead, codify them in statute to ensure their permanency?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, we absolutely should never backtrack on the commitments we've made. You would lose the workforce in an instant in doing that, and it would be very hard to recover.

The bill, as written, would codify many of the things that we're already doing which provides that guarantee. For me, when I look at the pay compensation plan that we just put in place, one of the most important things is to make sure that stays permanently linked to the General Schedule pay rate so we don't find ourselves in a position of trying to get back to that after a couple of years of decline. So we strongly support that legislation.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. Then last year, Ranking Member Thompson also, you know, introduced a Fund the TSA Act, which would provide funding to address many of the challenges facing TSA.

The bill would raise passenger security fee by \$2 for a one-way ticket, and end the diversion of fees away from TSA to the general Treasury and index fees to inflation going forward. Doing so would provide sufficient funding for salary increases and expand labor rights for TSA workers, additional Computed Tomography machines, and critical airport law enforcement and canine programs.

Although no one likes increased fees on their airline ticket, it is critical that we right-size the TSA budget and make sure you have the resources you need to carry out your mission.

Mr. Administrator, you have said before that you believe the Fund the TSA Act would be helpful to your agency, which I appreciate.

Did you have any conversation about the possibility of including an increase in passenger security fees as part of the budget request?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, I think, you know, if you look at when the 9/11 fee was established at its current \$5.60 level, there is nothing in there that adjusts that figure for inflation. So, if you just simply straight line adjust it for inflation, it would now be \$7.50, so roughly the \$2 that was mentioned.

So I agree that re-baselining it where it needs to be, and that generates about \$1.5 billion in additional revenue, re-baselining it where it is. But, importantly, to put an escalator in that legislation so we don't get behind by 4 or 5 percent each and every year.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. Then do you believe TSA's top-line budget number needs to increase to get the agency all the funding it really needs?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I think that's evidenced in the reductions you see in our budget, things that we want to invest in that we have to reduce.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, Chairman.

Administrator Pekoske, I just want to go back to where we left off the conversation a few minutes back. I want to talk about the security in the airports and the passenger experience, because I think they go hand-in-hand, and not just for the traveling public, but also for the workforce.

Again, I believe there are times that the work force is overburdened by large waves of the traveling public. It's not good for anybody.

What may we be able to do, whether it's a new guidance or requirements within TSA and how the departments are managed on the front lines, or is it a need for more investment of resources to get more staff, recruitment, retainment, et cetera, so that we can attend to these waves in the different times that they're coming.

If you're at JFK or LaGuardia on a Friday night, you're going to have a different experience than if you're there on a Tuesday afternoon. That's just New York City. Say the same for O'Hare or Reagan or Orlando or Buffalo Niagara International. Take your pick, as you know.

So what is it that we may be able to do to address those issues and make the experience for moving people through the process more efficient and effective?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes. Thanks for the question, sir. I would highlight your last point first is, providing more flexibility in staffing, because what ends up happening is if passenger volumes increase higher than what was originally projected in the budget—and fiscal year 2025 is a good example of that. We project in the budget that passenger volumes will increase 4.5 percent. They're at 8.5 percent already.

So what happens is that burden falls on the screening workforce. It falls on the vetting workforce that we have that does all the behind-the-scenes vetting of passengers. It falls on our Federal Air Marshal Service as well.

So, you know, providing at least close to commensurate increases in staffing with passenger volume growth—and we don't need to be exactly the same, because technology and efficiencies will allow us to be a little bit less than that, but not by half.

The other thing that I think is really important, and be happy to have a discussion with you more in depth about this, is we are putting together what we call a Customer Experience Roadmap, because the—I believe and I'm sure the officers believe as well, if we do a better job improving the customer, the passenger experience, those passengers will reflect that back to the officers.

I want to make sure that we focus on the individuals in our system that we have a concern about. That's the whole premise behind the PreCheck program is that, Hey, we have a certain set of passengers that we term trusted travelers. We can give them a lighter level of screening as a result. They move faster. They wait 10 min-

utes generally or less all the time. If we can either, you know, do a couple things: increase that PreCheck population. That would benefit us. It would benefit the travelers.

Then, increase things that we look at with respect to the customer experience. We're doing a lot of work with the U.S. Travel Association right now on that very topic. Their goal, and they stood up a commission for seamless and secure travel in the United States, and I think you'll see out of that commission results report some very good recommendations for all of us to consider.

Mr. KENNEDY. That's helpful. Does there need to be a commission study across the Nation to the various ports of call to address that issue as well?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Sir, there have been a lot of efforts by the Executive branch to look at customer experience writ large for taxpayers and for visitors to our country when they receive any Federal service whatsoever.

Each agency has some metrics to achieve in that regard. For us, one of the metrics is, Can we be more consistent in our wait time experience for passengers? We do have wait time standards, but we want to make sure that we don't sacrifice security effectiveness for efficiency. That goes kind-of back to the staffing and the technology issue I talked about before.

The other thing that the Chairman raised is that we do have a program for airports. If they want to purchase the technology themselves, they can purchase off of our, what we call a capability acceptance list. Many airports have done that already. LaGuardia has done it. JFK is going to be doing it. Denver has done it.

This allows them to kind-of get ahead of the curve when they open up a brand-new checkpoint. A lot of investment in airports around the country now. They don't want to open up a new checkpoint—I wouldn't either—and put old technology in that checkpoint. They want to put the latest technology in place, and this program gives them that avenue to do it. Sometimes, you know, it's up to \$50- or \$60 million worth of investment on the part of the airport.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you to the gentleman from New York.

I thank the witness for his valuable testimony and the Members for their questions. The Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for the witnesses, and we would ask the witness to respond to these in writing.

Pursuant to committee rule VII(D), the hearing record will be open for 10 days.

Without objection, this subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:39 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN CARLOS A. GIMENEZ FOR DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Question 1a. What forms of “acceptable alternate identification” has TSA identified for use in special circumstances at security checkpoints in coordination with its DHS counterparts? Please provide a list of “alternative forms of ID.”

Answer. Passengers, age 18 and older, must present valid, acceptable identification at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints to proceed through security screening. If a passenger does not have an acceptable ID, TSA may attempt to match the passenger to the information on the boarding pass using one of the following 3 alternative identification methods:

- *Two Alternative Forms of ID.*—If a passenger does not have an acceptable ID they may present two other forms of ID containing identifying information. Both must contain the passenger’s name to enable identity matching at the checkpoint. Preference is given to a government-issued ID.
- *TSA Form 415 Certification of Identity.*—When a passenger is unable to present either an acceptable ID or two alternative forms of ID, TSA contacts the National Transportation Vetting Center to attempt to verify the passenger’s identity through Knowledge-Based Authentication. During this process, the Center directs the TSA Travel Document Checker to ask the passenger specific questions to verify their identity.
- *Establish identity through an external agency.*—If a passenger’s identity cannot be verified through the National Transportation Vetting Center, the TSA officer must notify a law enforcement officer assigned to the airport to assist with verifying the passenger’s identity. For passengers who are foreign nationals, the TSA officer must notify a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer assigned to the airport. However, a foreign national presenting a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) document with an Alien Registration Number (A-number) will have their identity matched by a TSA officer using CBP One.

TSA subjects all passengers whose identity is verified using one of these alternative methods to additional physical screening to ensure the traveler poses no threat to transportation infrastructure and other passengers. This level of screening is significantly higher than the average traveler receives in the course of normal operations. You can find a list of acceptable IDs at TSA.gov: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification>.

Question 1b. According to the TSA website, a weapons permit or a temporary driver’s license is not an “acceptable” form of identification. Would these count as alternative forms of ID under TSA’s alternative identification methods?

Answer. There is no acceptable alternate identification list. If a passenger does not have an acceptable form of ID, the TSA officer will ask the individual if they have other forms of ID. A weapons permit or a temporary driver’s license may be considered, in conjunction with other forms of identification as part of this alternative identity verification process. All passengers who establish their identity through an alternative identity verification process receive additional physical screening.

Question 2. Do TSA’s acceptable identification policies impose a disparate cost burden on American citizens who pay for IDs relative to non-resident aliens who entered the United States illegally who do not?

Answer. TSA’s policies for acceptable identification do not impose a disparate cost burden on U.S. citizens relative to non-U.S. citizens paroled into the country. For the vast majority of travelers—who present an acceptable form of ID—TSA’s vetting and screening processes are quick and efficient. For a small percentage of travelers who do not present an acceptable form of identification, or travelers who have been identified through Secure Flight as higher-risk travelers—TSA has additional procedures necessary to address identity verification and ensure screening appropriate for these individuals. For the individuals paroled into the country who do not present

acceptable ID at the screening checkpoint, TSA is requiring a biometric match against DHS databases. If one of these individuals refuses to submit a biometric capture for use by facial recognition technology, they are not permitted to enter the sterile area and therefore cannot fly. TSA conducts additional screening on any traveler whose identity is verified using an alternative.

Question 3. Which DHS or non-DHS entities are involved with development of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Secure Docket Card?

Answer. Within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the following entities are involved in the development of the Secure Docket Card: Enforcement and Removal Operations and the Homeland Security Investigations Forensic Laboratory. Within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), outside of ICE, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and CBP offered input into the card design and content. Outside of DHS, ICE coordinated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, who uses a similar card for unaccompanied children.

Question 4. 49 C.F.R. § 1542 relates to airport security. Each airport operator must designate one or more Airport Security Coordinator(s) in its security program to serve as the primary and immediate contact for security-related activities and communications with TSA. Was TSA notified by any airport operator or airport security coordinator about migrants being sheltered in airports? If so, please describe in detail each time TSA was notified.

Answer. TSA's requirements for Airport Security Coordinators focus on compliance with TSA's requirements for the security of non-public areas (i.e., secure areas) of the airport, specifically the sterile area and Security Identification Credential Areas. TSA is not aware of any individuals paroled into the country being housed or sheltered in secure areas of an airport. As a result, TSA did not receive notification from any Airport Operators or Airport Security Coordinators.

Question 5a. 49 C.F.R. § 1542.101 relates to the general requirements of the airport security program. No person may operate an airport subject to § 1542.103 unless it adopts and carries out a security program. Has TSA received any request to amend an airport security program from airports that housed or sheltered migrants? If so, which airport(s)?

Question 5b. If an airport failed to amend the airport security program and was housing migrants in a secure or nonsecure area of the airport, would that be in violation of 49 C.F.R. § 1542.101?

Answer. An airport operator would not need to amend its security program to house individuals paroled into the country in non-secure areas of the airport. TSA is not aware of any such individuals being sheltered in secure areas and has not received any requests to amend any airport's security program relative to the sheltering of these individuals. There is no violation of 1542.101 or the airport security program for providing sheltering to persons in a non-regulated portion of the airport property.

Question 6a. Under § 1542.107, TSA must be notified when there is a change in condition affecting security. Was TSA notified of any change(s) in security conditions by any airport that sheltered or housed migrants?

Question 6b. If airports did not notify TSA of any changes in security conditions, did the TSA require any airport to make appropriate changes after public reporting revealed migrants living in an airport?

Answer. TSA was not notified of any changes in security conditions by any airport that is reported to have sheltered or housed individuals paroled into the country. Based on reports and TSA's discussions with local personnel, any sheltering of these individuals occurred in a public portion of the airport property. Local stakeholders would have responsibility for the security of these areas. There would be no need for airports to provide notice of a changed condition prescribed by 1542.207 as long as the sheltering of individuals paroled into the country occurs in a public portion of airport property.

Question 7a. For each airport or airport facility that housed or sheltered migrants, please provide answers to the following questions:

Was TSA consulted about housing migrants at airport or airport facilities, either prior to or after migrants arrived? If so, please describe each of those recommendation(s) or guidance(s).

Question 7b. What area(s) of the airports were migrants allowed to access within each airport?

Question 7c. Who provided approval for migrants to be sheltered at each airport?

Question 7d. Who was responsible for security of that area?

Question 7e. Was the TSA notified each time a security incident occurred?

Question 7f. Were migrants screened upon entering the airport?

Question 7g. Has TSA changed any internal policies or guidance related to migrants sheltering at airports? If so, please provide a copy of the old policy and new policy.

Question 7h. Did TSA spend any additional funds to support migrants being housed or sheltered at airports? If so, please provide the total broken down by airport and provide a description of what the funds were used for.

Answer. TSA was not consulted about the sheltering on airport property of individuals paroled into the country. To the best of our knowledge, no airport has granted access to sterile areas of the airport for the purpose of housing individuals paroled into the country. TSA does not control whether the airports grant access to public or other areas of the airport that do not affect TSA's ability to perform its responsibilities. No approval was required by TSA, nor was it granted by or requested from TSA. Local airport authorities are responsible for the security of those areas. TSA would be notified, per standard reporting procedures, of security incidents at an airport subject to a TSA security program. TSA is not aware of any security incidents perpetrated by persons paroled into the country who were being provided housing at airport locations. TSA does not require screening for persons entering non-sterile areas of airports. Any person entering the sterile area of an airport from the public side is screened (with the exception of select individuals working at the airport that may have bypass authority). As to TSA's knowledge, all housing for individuals paroled into the country was provided in non-sterile areas of the airport, local stakeholders would have responsibility for the security of those areas. No internal policy or guidance has been issued by TSA as public area security is controlled by local authorities and TSA is not aware of any efforts to provide housing to individuals paroled into the country within sterile areas of airports. No TSA funds were spent relative to the sheltering of individuals paroled into the country.

Question 8. Are there alternative financing options available to you or that Congress could consider that would accelerate the procurement of additional technology systems like CT and CAT-II?

Answer. To accelerate procurement and fielding computed tomography (CT) and credential authentication technology (CAT), additional appropriations would be required. There are currently no known supply chain issues.

Question 9a. We already have a technology fund that uses existing passenger security fee revenue for checked baggage systems.

Would you be open to using this fund for checkpoint security technology or creating a similar fund dedicated to checkpoint security technology?

Answer. The current statutory language for the Aviation Security Capital Fund (ASCF) limits its use to financing airport security capital improvement projects, implicitly including checked baggage technology capital improvement projects; however, with legislative modifications, the fund could be expanded to cover TSA's direct acquisition of checkpoint technology in addition to the currently-authorized checked-baggage systems. TSA supports the expansion of the authority of this fund to specifically cover the direct acquisition of checkpoint technologies and checked baggage systems.

Question 9b. Would you support right-sizing this account for inflation and then pegging it to inflation while expanding the use to include checkpoint technologies?

Answer. Rightsizing the ASCF and then continuing to adjust for inflation will reduce the amount of fee revenue available to support TSA security operations and require additional appropriations. The ASCF has not been adjusted for inflation since it was introduced in 2004, effectively reducing the buying power of this account almost by half, though at the same time freeing up fee revenue to sustain the Transportation Security Officer (TSO) workforce. TSA supports the expansion of the authority of this fund to specifically cover the direct acquisition of checkpoint technologies and checked baggage systems, which would allow for greater flexibility in technology procurements and could help reduce the time line of reaching Full Operational Capability for checkpoint technology for both CT and CAT.

Question 10. What impact does a slow, 20+-year, acquisition program have on TSA's industry partners? Is there not a significant risk that industry could lose talent and production capability or even walk away? This is especially concerning given the growth of People's Republic of China-based companies at international airports overseas.

Answer. A key factor in the impact of a long 20+-year acquisition program, that is actively procuring and deploying technology during that time, is the potential that the technology the program acquires could become technically obsolete before, by, or shortly after it achieves Full Operational Capability. This would depend on the specific platform's degree of upgradability. Most platforms are designed to be upgradable for many years, but 20 years is challenging in most instances. Many industry partners are happy to support their systems for extended times after they

have been deployed. Another key factor is the annual funding available for procurement of new systems. Industry is incentivized to continue to compete if their risk vs. potential reward calculations supports a business investment decision. The less annual funding potentially available to them, the less apt they are to continue. Vendors must also assess their competition and their ability to attract government purchases based on the capability they can offer and the price at which they can provide it.

Question 11a. A delayed time line to field new CT systems means less effective legacy carry-on baggage screening equipment will be in place longer.

What is the expected life span of the legacy equipment?

Question 11b. Will those systems last until 2042?

Question 11c. What is the long-term operational cost to maintain the legacy systems beyond their expected service life?

Answer. TSA does not replace security equipment based on age. Recapitalization (replacement) of equipment only occurs when the technology is no longer capable of meeting current detection standards and cannot be upgraded to do so. Effective preventive and corrective maintenance and inclusion of parts obsolescence requirements in Performance-Based Logistics (PBL) contracts provides the ability to replace every component in a scanner and extends the life of these systems with new components, meaning there is a continuous service life extension function in place. However, Advanced Technology (AT) technical obsolescence (detection) is a real risk prior to fiscal year 2042. DHS established the CT program to address this issue, as AT detection capability has been determined to be capped at "Tier 2", which limits its ability to detect at the threat masses and with the material discrimination we believe will be necessary as the threat becomes more sophisticated. TSA will continue to establish long-term maintenance agreements that include parts obsolescence requirements to ensure that legacy AT X-ray systems remain viable until CT Full Operational Capability is reached. The cost to operate and maintain legacy systems is equivalent to CT mid-size and base systems, and less than CT full-size systems. Maintenance costs have risen with inflation, but have not been significantly impacted by obsolescence. The operational cost of utilizing and attempting to upgrade legacy systems until 2042 is the opportunity cost of delaying the deployment of more capable, more effective CT technologies to address evolving threats.

Question 12a. As you know, in 2023, TSA screened a record 858 million passengers and is on track to surpass that this year. As you look at TSA's ability to process passengers, I would like to discuss remote screening and other force multiplying opportunities at TSA that utilize burgeoning technologies like AI.

To what extent is TSA looking to adopt remote screening at airports?

Question 12b. How do you see investments in digital infrastructure at Cat-X airports unlocking new TSA force multipliers like remote screening and other capabilities that are enabled by high-speed, secure, private interconnectivity?

Question 12c. How does the efficiency level of remote screening compare to existing screening procedures?

Question 12d. What investment level in digital infrastructure would allow TSA to successfully interconnect airports with the TSA cloud environment?

Answer. TSA is looking to utilize remote screening at airports with the priority being Category X and I airports. These airports represent the Nation's busiest airports throughout the country. As technology matures and TSA is able to utilize remote screening for geographically-diverse airports, TSA would evaluate the expansion of remote screening to smaller airports. The greatest force multipliers cannot occur until the vulnerabilities are addressed in the screening equipment. However, once vulnerabilities in screening equipment are corrected such that they can be networked beyond one checkpoint or one airport, high-speed, secure, private interconnectivity will unlock several TSA force multipliers. Remote screening may be used across an entire airport, across an entire State, and across an entire region should high-speed interconnectivity be provided to each of the locations. This could drive efficiency for passenger throughput across all of the checkpoints that are interconnected, but each would require high-speed, secure, reliable, private interconnectivity. As algorithms get better and possibly through the use of AI, a system might be able to detect an aggregation of objects going through various checkpoints that will meet up at a common destination. Cat X airports have the greatest volume, thus interconnectivity at Cat X airports will provide the greatest immediate benefit of these technological advances. The implementation of remote screening provides a number of quantitative and qualitative benefits to airports. With the implementation of remote screening lanes, airports can expect to see an increase of 10–15 percent in passenger throughput. This increase in throughput is achieved without the installation of additional checkpoint lanes, but rather through the addition of an image review position at a ratio of one per every 2 lanes. While this increases

the number of TSOs staffing the checkpoint lane, the increased throughput of the checkpoint lanes offsets the staffing increase and provides TSA with a much-needed way to keep up with the increased traveler volume with the existing number of screening lanes at the Nation's airports. Once vulnerabilities in screening equipment are corrected such that the devices can be connected to a wide-area network, an assessment would need to be conducted at each of the intended airports (starting with Cat X) to determine the networking and physical requirements to take the digital infrastructure to the appropriate level. Requirements for each airport will be different. Each airport will require a site survey to address items such as local connectivity, interconnectivity, and costs.

Question 13a. TSA has not opened a qualification window for checked baggage inline screening systems since 2015. In fiscal year 2023, the Congress appropriated \$5 million above the request in the O&S Mission Support PPA to hire additional support staff to accelerate the opening of a new checked baggage qualification window. While that funding is expected to end this year in Q4 of fiscal year 2024, TSA's fiscal year 2025 budget request does not recur this funding.

Answer. Modern Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) EDS technology is widely deployed at many European and International Airports, including Last-Point-of-Departure (LPD) Airports. Most European and International Airports follow a 3–6-month tender process to procure modern EDS technology that addresses current and rapidly-evolving threats. However, TSA continues to follow its multi-year Operational Test & Evaluation (OT&E) process to consider proven COTS EDS technology that is widely deployed and currently in use with trusted partner nations world-wide. Instead of working with industry to develop and acquire new EDS systems, TSA continues to buy the same 20-year-old legacy EDS systems, which will risk significant end-of-life issues for on-going supportability.

Question 13b. Does TSA have any plans to establish a new checked baggage qualification opportunity for industry?

Answer. TSA does intend to create a formal qualification opportunity for industry. TSA utilized the funding provided by Congress in 2023 to accelerate requirements development. These updated requirements will form the basis of the next qualification opportunity for industry. Finalizing the requirements will require additional investment. Qualification efforts are a multi-year resource requirement and will require multi-year funding and staffing commitments. TSA is working to identify the resource requirements and time lines to establish the next opportunity. This will require a return to a mixed life-cycle approach that allows TSA to sustain and enhance existing systems while managing qualification efforts and consideration of new systems.

Question 13b. Does TSA have any plans to incorporate Section 1914 of Public Law 115–254, “Reciprocal Recognition of Security Standards” into its Qualification and OT&E processes for EDS technology? If not, why not?

Question 13c. Is TSA aware of any data available from years of operational use of modern ECAC-approved EDS technology? If so, are there opportunities for TSA to leverage this data to expedite or bypass the OT&E process and immediately include certain DHS/TSA-certified EDS technology on TSA's current checked baggage EDS Qualified Product List (QPL)?

Question 13d. What efforts has TSA made to date to engage with security manufacturers to obtain existing operational use data to accelerate the Qualification and OT&E processes and deploy advanced EDS technology capabilities at TSA checkpoints? Does TSA have future plans to do so?

Answer. TSA continues to work on aligning standards with international partners. In the checked baggage mission space, we support international partners through our rolling certification test opportunities. For formal TSA qualification, international data will be considered in order to reduce the scope of formal qualification efforts. Future qualification efforts will evaluate all applicable internationally-sourced operational utilization data to accelerate the path to qualification. While there is not currently alignment at the detection level, reliability, maintainability, and availability data from international sites will be critical in tailoring the scope and duration of TSA's evaluation to support qualification efforts. TSA will need to conduct formal qualification efforts to ensure all future EDS can meet the mission needs of TSOs in actual checked baggage screening operations. The total potential time savings will not be known until a formal review of system configuration can be conducted. TSA does not have an open qualification window for EDS within the checked baggage mission space. The requirements and resources are not available to support formal qualification efforts. TSA has added updated detection standards to its existing certification activities so that vendors can see the direction of future EDS qualification efforts. TSA has met individually with vendors of certified systems to discuss future detection needs, increased system capacity, user interface re-

quirements, interoperability needs, sustainability cost considerations, and additional cybersecurity plans for future systems. During these vendor discussions, TSA has included the types of international operational data that can be reviewed and examined to potentially accelerate qualification efforts once a window is open.

Question 14. Does TSA have plans to invest in the establishment of an open architecture interoperability test bed?

Is TSA's Systems Integration Facility (TSIF) equipped to establish an open architecture interoperability test bed to evaluate TSA compliance to open architecture standards? If not, then what capabilities would the TSIF need to acquire to do so?

What investment requirements are necessary to establish an open architecture interoperability test bed?

By when could TSA budget for an open architecture interoperability test bed?

Answer. TSA has already initiated efforts to establish an open architecture interoperability test bed. Aspects of this work were conducted in fiscal year 2023, in the preparation and installation of Threat Recognition Systems (TRS) at the Transportation Security Lab and TSA Systems Integration Facility. The TRS represents base platform that allows for evaluation of modules of capability to determine interoperability with the overall system-of-systems design approach and the associated key standards the design approach leverages. These standards are Digital Imaging and Communication in Security (DICOS) as the data standard and Open Platform Software Library (OPSL) as the interface standard. TSA also awarded a specific support contract (Open Architecture Enabled Support (OAES) contract) in fiscal year 2023 to allow for the continued updates of the DICOS and OPLS Software Development Kits to support interoperability. In addition to the physical setups at the labs, TSA is investigating the means of establishing a more robust virtual test bed for supporting interoperability testing. Funding limitations have delayed aspects of this work but TSA is working to transition the TRS design to a hardware independent containerized approach which will further enable interoperability and flexibility in test bed implementation. This virtual TRS increases testing efficiency and provides a means to expedite testing and reduce re-test on the physical hardware (post-integration). Additional funding is needed to establish the test bed.

