

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 2, 2018

The Honorable David P. Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598-6001

Dear Administrator Pekoske:

We write to express our strong concern that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is considering eliminating passenger screening at more than 150 small and medium-sized airports across the United States and to request additional information on this proposal.

Today's threat environment is diverse and significant. It is critical that any substantive changes to TSA policy are thoroughly analyzed and that TSA engages with the traveling public, industry, and Congress prior to moving forward.

Recent reports that TSA has compiled a working group to examine the potential risks of eliminating passenger screening at small and medium-sized airports are of particular concern given the significant change in policy being discussed and the potential risk and economic effects. According to the reports, the change would affect roughly 10,000 daily passengers, more than 150 airports, and more than 1,200 TSA employees.¹

In light of these reports, we ask that you respond to the following inquiries no later than August 16, 2018:

1. What was the impetus for creating the working group?
2. What airports are being considered for screening elimination?
3. If the proposal was adopted, how would TSA ensure passengers and baggage are screened before transferring to flights at larger airports?
4. If the proposal was adopted, how would the more than 1,200 employees that currently staff the airports being considered be affected?
5. If the proposal was adopted, how would the budget savings be used?
6. Has TSA consulted with industry stakeholders on the proposal?
7. Has TSA conducted a risk assessment of the proposal?
8. Has TSA conducted an economic assessment of the proposal?
9. What is the current status of your consideration of the proposal?
10. Please provide the working group's report and any recommendations.

¹ Marsh, Rene, and Eli Watkins, "CNN exclusive: TSA considering eliminating screening at smaller airports," *CNN*, 1 Aug. 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/01/politics/tsa-considering-eliminating-screening-at-smaller-airports/index.html>.

While it is important for TSA to discuss operational efficiencies as part of its yearly budget process, we believe that strengthening and improving the security of our nation's aviation transportation system--not cutting essential, life-saving screening--is of paramount importance. Instead of cutting screening at these airports, TSA should request that Congress redirect all passenger security fees to TSA.

H.R. 2514, the Funding for Aviation Screeners and Threat Elimination Restoration (FASTER) Act, which we sponsored together, would end the diversion of revenue collected from an airline passenger fee, known as the September 11 security fee, to the General Fund and prevent Congress from raiding the funds in the future to pay for unrelated programs. Unless current law is changed, more than \$19 billion will be diverted from aviation security through Fiscal Year (FY) 2027. As you previously stated during a hearing before the House Committee on Homeland Security, the return of these passenger fees to their original, intended purpose would "go a long way" towards ultimately making our travel more secure.²

TSA was created in the months after the September 11 terrorist attacks in order to keep American travelers secure. Diminishing the security of airline passengers at small and medium-sized airports is counter to TSA's mission. We appreciate your timely response to our questions as well as your consideration of preferable budget solutions.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

² *Preventing The Next Attack: TSA's Role in Keeping Our Transportation System Secure*, 115th Cong., 8 Nov. 2017 (testimony of David Pekoske), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-115hhrg29470/pdf/CHRG-115hhrg29470.pdf>.