

Oral Statement
CHS-TMS Hearing
15 May 2024

Opening

Chairman Gimenez, RM 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 this subcommittee. He was a wonderful man and public servant. On behalf of TSA, I offer our condolences to his family, friends and to you, his colleagues. He will be missed.

Intro

- Turning to TSA's budget, I appreciate your support of our recently enacted FY24 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 a significant positive impact on TSA:
 - Our retention is up.
 - We have many more candidates pursuing opportunities to serve.
 - And morale has markedly improved as reflected in the highest-ever Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results in TSA's history.

- Tomorrow, I will sign our new and expanded Collective Bargaining Agreement which is also fully supported by the FY24 appropriation.

- The President’s FY25 Request, seeks to build upon FY24 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.

People & Partnerships

- 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% in 2023. And this year, the growth continues:
 - 9% growth at Miami International and 8% in Detroit;
 - 11% at Lafayette Regional; 6% at JFK; and 10% in Tampa.
 - Furthermore, LAX and Buffalo Niagara have seen a 7% and 14% volume growth respectively.
 - 7 of the 10 busiest days ever in US airports occurred in the last 12 months; 2 in just the past week.

- And we project 3.1 million passengers will be screened on some days this 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 for what will likely be our busiest summer yet.

Technology

An important priority in the President's FY25 Request is continued investment in technology at our security checkpoints across the country.

- Two ongoing technology projects in particular are included in the FY25 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 FY25 request (\$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 FY25 request (\$9 million) our capital 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.

911 Passenger Fee

- One potential solution to the current budget environment may be the 9/11 Passenger Security Fee. For the past three 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.
 - This diversion of fee revenue began with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and is due to expire at the end of FY27.
 - Ending the fee diversion early, in FY25, 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 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.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, 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 TSA has the resources and authorities needed to meet its mission in protection our nation's vital transportation system.