



## UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

October 13, 2016

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

In the view of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, a signature accomplishment of your tenure as Secretary of Commerce has been your development of a full working partnership with the Secretary of Homeland Security. This interdepartmental spirit of cooperation in furtherance of overarching policy priorities has led to outstanding results for travel and tourism during this Administration.

In 2016, from expanded trusted traveler programs to traveler-friendly automated passport control kiosks to proliferating preclearance facilities, there is much going well in the world of travel security and customer experience; however, the TTAB believes there is still priority work that must be done to ensure the momentum continues. Over the full two year tenure of our board, we will have much to say on this topic; in this first set of recommendations, designed to be considered before your tenure ends in January 2017, we are offering our initial prioritized ideas that we believe are impactful, timely and actionable.

We are mindful that these recommendations variously require action by Congress and/or agencies of the Department of Homeland Security; however, we are bringing them forward to you because of the extraordinary leadership role you play in the Administration on all matters relating to travel and tourism policy. We respectfully and specifically ask you to share them with the Tourism Policy Council and ask for them to be adopted as Administration priorities. We also ask for you to speak to the importance of these issues whenever you have opportunities to address relevant government and industry audiences, as you have done so effectively in the past. We are grateful for your ongoing willingness to engage, persuade, and activate your colleagues on behalf of travel and tourism.

### **Recommendation One: Restore CBP and TSA Funding and Stop Diversion**

First and foremost, Madam Secretary, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) and the Transportation Security Administration (“TSA”) keep our country, our citizens, our visitors and our borders safe. To discharge this vital mission, the agencies require an adequate level of funding. And yet, the chronic diversion of airline passenger and other dedicated traveler

security fees away from TSA and CBP has diminished their capabilities to hire an adequate complement of personnel, to procure and deploy cutting edge technology, and to continually improve the customer experience. Security fees that are collected from passengers should be dedicated solely to TSA and CBP. Legislative mandates to divert these fees toward deficit reduction or other spending priorities have a direct, negative impact on the ability of TSA and CBP to perform their duties. They also increase the financial burden on airport and airline operators to cover shortfalls and put unfair cost burdens on airline passengers who are paying for security benefits they are not fully receiving. Our security agencies must have the resources to keep pace with projected domestic and international travel demand. In our board's view, the entire amount of security fees collected from passengers should be used for security. We hope you will speak publicly to this critical, foundational issue before your departure.

### **Recommendation Two: Develop Hiring and Retention Strategies**

A significant challenge for both CBP and TSA is hiring and retaining talent. As with all organizations, TSA and CBP need skilled, qualified people to make them run. Of course, the stakes are extraordinarily high when the mission is to deploy an effective counterterrorism workforce that will keep travelers and our nation's borders safe and secure. We've learned that CBP is able to hire less than 1% of its applicants, since so many are unable to pass background checks or otherwise fail to meet job requirements. TSA has a significant retention problem, with an annual turnover rate of 8% for full time employees and 20% for part time employees. There are undoubtedly many reasons for these human resources challenges, and many possible approaches to correcting them, but the TTAB respectfully submits that part of the solution could be in creating visible, interagency career paths for employees throughout DHS. To the extent TSA employees are able to pursue a career path into law enforcement at CBP, they may in fact stay longer within the agency. In 2013, the TTAB requested that a DHS task force be formed, that would among other things consider whether there are TSA employees who would be eligible for further law enforcement training. We continue to believe that this recommendation should be vigorously pursued, especially in light of the significant personnel shortages both agencies are experiencing. We would also like to reiterate our recommendation to evaluate opportunities to cross train and develop shared use employees between the two agencies, wherever it makes sense to do so. This could help cover staffing shortages for workforces that often have massive variations in workload during the day and give employees a clear path forward in their careers.

### **Recommendation Three: Conduct a Comprehensive Technology Audit of Staffing Solutions**

In the face of continuing budget constraints and the need to optimize the deployment of the security workforce for the sake of all industry stakeholders, including the U.S. taxpayer, we recommend that DHS undertake an intensive technology audit of their current staffing technology solutions and an analysis of what is available in the marketplace today.

With the strains on hiring and retaining the full complement of workers at the agencies, it is imperative that the existing workforce be optimally deployed. Indeed, discharging the agencies' security mission depends on authorization from Congress to hire officers, then actually hiring and retaining them, and finally deploying them in the most efficient way. The agencies have developed staffing plans and models that they have refined and are improving; they are engaging in outreach to airlines and airports to identify long term demand forecasts and near term schedule change and service interruption issues that require nimble adjustments to the staffing plan.

However, there are multiple variables that must be taken into account in developing and executing an optimal staff plan, including work and union rules; the multiplicity of worker skill sets; the existence of full time and part time workers; and the realities of workers being absent and the need for replacements to be quickly found. Passenger loads; flight arrivals and departures; flows at airport counters; and the mix of domestic and international passengers, transfer passengers, and charter passengers all are dynamically in play. And indeed, all can and should be automated in today's environment. The TTAB has some concern that the agencies have not fully explored the availability and capability of capturing and organizing data through this technology, which when deployed could free up administrative personnel from time-consuming tasks to be more productively engaged on the front line with travelers.

The TTAB believes that the agencies would benefit from assessing and adopting technologies that would replace less-efficient manual processes. Available technologies continuously collect and aggregate real-time data from numerous sources including airlines, airports and third party providers. This audit could be facilitated through the acquisition of skilled talent for this purpose from the DHS Loaned Executive Program, which was established to leverage private-sector expertise and improve the U.S. aviation screening and visitor entry process. As mentioned, the agencies have done an outstanding job of committing themselves to world class security and world class facilitation. Investing in cutting-edge staffing technology will allow them to deliver more of both.

#### **Recommendation Four: Deploy Wait Time Notification Technology at U.S. Airports to Improve Customer Satisfaction**

One of the key areas to explore is the availability of technology that would continuously inform travelers of the wait times at each available security checkpoint. For example, at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, technology was installed that enables the current wait time at specific TSA Pre-Check screening lines to be displayed on information screens and on the airport's website. This technology also notifies TSA personnel by text or email when processing times are increasing, so they can proactively open up additional screening lines. We encourage TSA and CBP to deploy similar technology at departure and arrival checkpoints to continuously update travelers about wait times and enable both agencies to better manage wait times and passenger flow. Giving travelers accurate information about wait times and the sense that queues are being well-managed could significantly reduce traveler anxiety and lead to better customer experiences, while promoting the efficient allocation of staffing resources. We ask that DHS (in consultation with TSA and CBP) publish a report by March 31, 2017 detailing their efforts to evaluate and procure this technology.

#### **Summary**

The initial recommendations by the TTAB's Travel Security and Customer Experience Subcommittee are as follows:

- 1. We recommend that Congress restore all security fees collected from airline passengers to CBP and TSA and stopping the diversion of those fees for other, unrelated purposes. The agencies simply cannot discharge their vital national security responsibilities without adequate funding.**
- 2. We recommend that DHS form a personnel task force that would help define a career path within the department that would allow promising TSA personnel to**

become law enforcement agents at CBP, thereby improving the hiring and retention challenges at both agencies. Additionally, we recommend DHS find ways to cross-train TSA and CBP personnel, wherever that cross training is appropriate, so that staffing shortages can be mitigated.

3. We recommend that DHS undertake a comprehensive technology audit of staffing solutions and obtain qualified audit personnel through the DHS Loaned Executive Program.
4. We recommend specifically that TSA and CBP deploy technology that will permit travelers to be continuously updated on the wait times at each security checkpoint and entry queue, which will allow them to better manage and anticipate their waiting time and lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction. We ask that DHS (in consultation with TSA and CBP) publish a report by March 31, 2017 detailing their efforts to evaluate and procure this technology.

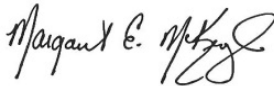
Madam Secretary, we respectfully submit these recommendations to you and ask you to bring them forward to the Tourism Policy Council and socialize them specifically with Secretary Johnson, Commissioner Kerlikowske and Administrator Neffenger. We have worked closely with members of their teams in developing these ideas; they have been improved through their thoughtful input.

While these will be the only recommendations from the Travel Security and Customer Experience Subcommittee during your remaining term, we are looking forward to the next Administration and the work we will undertake in 2017. There are many important and pressing topics to consider under our broad mandate (including the critical issue of how to expand enrollment in trusted traveler programs through public private partnerships), and as we go forward, we will commit ourselves to building on the work you challenged us to pursue—and prioritize. You inspired us to do our best work and are ever grateful for the steadfast support you've shown for our industry.

Respectfully submitted,



John Sprouls  
Chair



Margaret McKeough  
Vice Chair



Greg Stubblefield  
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Bruce Charendoff  
Chair, Travel Security and Customer  
Experience Subcommittee



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