



## UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

July 29, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Pritzker,

The United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (Board) is pleased to provide this recommendation for a national goal to enhance the entry process of international travelers arriving by air, in response to the Memorandum to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies signed by President Obama on May 22, 2014 (the "Presidential Memorandum"). The Board appreciates the opportunity to participate in this important initiative.

As the Board considered this challenge, we recognized the President's overarching goal of welcoming 100 million international visitors by 2021 would increase current visitation levels by 40 percent and drive an additional estimated \$78 billion in visitor spending in the U.S., increasing exports and growing the U.S. economy. This will present tremendous volume growth at our airports and ports of entry. We firmly believe that the international traveler should have an excellent experience – and the expectation for an excellent experience – every time he or she travels to the United States. Thus, a national goal for the entry process must ensure an efficient, high-quality, professional and pleasant customer service experience where all partners are committed to and invested in its delivery. This will be critical as the United States competes vigorously for international travelers and the exports produced by their visitation and spending.

### **Recommended National Goal**

The Board recommends the national goal address both efficiency and satisfaction, in two parts:

- By 2017, 90% of travelers will have a good or excellent customer service experience; and
- All passengers will complete the arrivals process within 45-60 minutes (excluding passengers referred for additional inspection).

The Presidential Memorandum directs the establishment of a “national goal for improving service levels for international arrivals, including the time passengers spend waiting for primary inspection, i.e. passport control, and other steps of the arrival process.” Elsewhere, the Presidential Memorandum directs that in developing the national goal, consideration should be given to “all steps the Federal Government can take to improve the arrival experience, including by expediting primary inspection and customs clearance, while maintaining public health and national security.” The recommended goal responds directly to these admonitions by setting a specific, measureable and aspirational target for “the time passengers spend waiting” for the entire entry process – the primary and subsequent visitor inspection steps combined.

We note that the recommended goal is consistent with the 45-minute processing standard recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). ICAO recommended practices on facilitation are found in Annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, to which the United States is a signatory party. Chapter 3 addresses entry and departure of persons and baggage and recommends that aircraft operators and airport operators establish a goal to clear within 45 minutes of disembarkation from the aircraft of all passengers requiring not more than normal inspection, regardless of aircraft size and scheduled arrival time.

### **Achieving the National Goal**

The Federal Government, primarily the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), working with airports and airlines, already has made significant strides in improving the arrival experience for international visitors by initiating new measures and technologies such as Automated Passport Control (“APC”) kiosks and the Global Entry program. The Board commends CBP, airports and airlines for these efforts and encourages them to continue to collaborate on even more creative solutions. However, meeting the ambitious goal outlined above will require further innovation, improvement, and partnership.

To achieve the recommended goal, the Department of Commerce (Commerce), DHS, CBP, airlines, airports, and other key stakeholders should collaborate and consider the following measures:

- Modernize the passenger screening exit process by eliminating egress chokepoints while conducting needed screening through other means
- Seek a solution that allows hiring/deploying part-time CBP officers to better respond to varying visitor volumes
- Ensure key airports are adequately staffed at peak arrival times including an on-call program for disruptive weather days
- Ensure mutual recognition of trusted traveler programs between major trade/travel partners such as the EU, Canada, Japan and Australia

- Improve signage, including use of international icons, leading to and within the inspection process to direct eligible citizens and non-citizens to, as appropriate, APC kiosks, Global Entry kiosks or other expedited processing points such as 1-stop processing
- Continue installation of APC kiosks at key airports
- Develop mobile applications to expedite primary inspection
- Develop a process to expedite and process visitors who have connecting flights scheduled within 90 minutes from arrival block time
- All users of CBP resources (including those passing through the land border environment) should contribute revenues to fund CBP in an equitable manner
- Conduct customer service and cultural sensitivity training with all front line employees
- Provide arriving-airport information (in different languages) about processes
- Explore opportunities for line management systems that recognize different groups of travelers

### **Measuring the National Goal**

The Board recommends that the Commerce, CBP, and DHS, in consultation with the private sector, work together to develop a rating system of each individual port's efficiency to support the national goal and the guidelines for its use. The agencies should be tasked to lead this public/private sector initiative and to develop a matrix of key components that directly impact traveler satisfaction. Items to be considered for inclusion in this analysis are:

1. Block Time to Clearance of Primary Inspection
2. Baggage Delivery Time
3. Post Primary Inspection
4. Aesthetics of Overall Facility
5. Use of Technology Upgrades to Enhance Processing Efficiency and Comfort
6. Implementation of Paperless Exiting System
7. Additional Amenities
8. Services Offered in Conjunction with Local Aviation Authority
9. Results of the Survey of International Air Travelers
10. Results of Ongoing Exiting Survey Measuring Overall Customer Satisfaction (including measures of a visitor's overall experience versus expectations, intent to return and perception of wait time, facility cleanliness, encounters with employees, welcoming atmosphere and attitude, and ease of navigating through the entry process)

The rating systems and the use of its results should have the objective of improving the performance of the individual airports as well as the aggregate airport system such that the U.S. is competitive with or exceeds services offered at airports outside the United States.

The actual matrix of measurable criteria leading to overall ratings shall be developed by a work group of public and private participants who will make final recommendations to Commerce and CBP of index factors and identify third party entities to conduct independent analyses and rating awards.

The Board believes that initiating a rating system is important. Operational improvements will be realized by officials at each port understanding they do not want to be deficient outliers in terms of efficiency. The Board also firmly believes local communities will better engage in the process if they know they collectively will be impacted by the effectiveness or rating of their local port operation, establishing accountability at the local level.

### Conclusion

We wish to underscore that the goal around wait times is aspirational. Time, resources and the good faith effort of all stakeholders will be necessary to achieve the goal. It will not be an easy task at every airport, but a goal without challenges is not a goal. The individual and collaborative efforts by Congress, government agencies, airports and airlines to execute action plans toward this goal will result in expediting the arrival and entry process for international visitors and improving their entry experience. Success will occur as visitor processing times improve and surveys demonstrate overall improved satisfaction with the entry experience. We believe success will drive more travel to the United States, which will benefit our national and regional economies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views and recommendations on improving the arrival experience for international visitors. This issue is vitally important to all sectors of the travel and tourism industry. A national goal specific to the entry process will go a long way toward achieving the overarching National Travel and Tourism Strategy goal of attracting 100 million visitors by 2021.

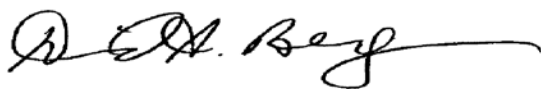
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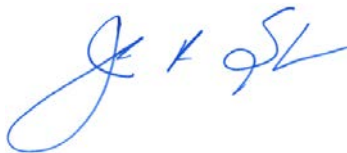
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