



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica
Chairman

Nick J. Rahall, III
Ranking Member

March 13, 2012

James W. Coon II, Chief of Staff

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[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

As you may know, Congress recently passed the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (H.R. 658), and it was signed into law by the President on February 14, 2012. In addition to providing long-term funding and policy direction to the Federal Aviation Administration and aviation industry, this law also reforms the Screening Partnership Program (SPP) of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The SPP allows airports to opt-out of the "all-Federal" screening model, and instead use qualified private screeners under Federal supervision.

Given the newly enacted changes to the SPP and the importance of good customer service and efficiency for airport operators, the Act provides you with the opportunity to consider converting to a certified private screening operation. Our Committee is pleased to offer support should you consider such action at your airport.

As you may know, San Francisco International Airport is the largest airport participating in the Screening Partnership Program. It has developed an outstanding reputation, and is a place where many true innovations, both in terms of security and customer service, were first developed and deployed. As is the case at San Francisco and other participating airports, screening services are provided by qualified private screening companies with strong TSA oversight and at no additional cost to the airports. This model is highly effective, provides true flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the airport, and has been praised by the airports currently participating in the SPP.

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The reforms to the SPP included in the FAA reauthorization law that improve the program are quite specific. First, the Act states that the TSA shall approve SPP applications if the newly-enacted standards are met. Second, it allows each airport to provide greater input regarding the airport's preferred vendor when applying for this program. Third, it establishes clear standards by which SPP applications must be fairly and equitably measured. Fourth, it requires a timely review of SPP applications by the TSA. Fifth, it requires that the TSA provide transparency and constructive feedback to the airports, as well as to Congress, regarding the merits of each SPP application and the basis for any decision made by the TSA, including, if denied, how each application could be improved. It requires the TSA to reconsider airport applications denied last year by applying the new review process and standards. Finally, the TSA will continue to be responsible for all costs and liability protection for airports participating in the SPP. The Committee has asked TSA to provide specific guidelines on the new application process and criteria that must be met for the approval of an airport's application.

I strongly encourage you to look closely at this program and to consider what participating in the SPP can do for your airport and the travelers that you serve. Should your airport decide to pursue this course of action, I will lend my full support to your effort. I believe that opting to have screening services provided by a certified private screening company under TSA oversight will result in better customer service, improved employee morale, greater flexibility, and superior operational efficiencies. In addition, security will not be compromised while screening costs and oversight will continue to be the responsibility of the TSA.

It is both the intent and spirit of the law that the TSA should cooperate fully with airports that are applying to participate in the SPP and/or transitioning to the SPP. The Committee will be closely monitoring the actions of the TSA. Should any employee or official of the TSA take any action to thwart the intent of Congress, we encourage you to contact the Oversight and Investigations staff of the Committee to report such activities. My Aviation Subcommittee staff stands ready to assist you should you move forward with a decision to participate in this program. Please feel free to contact me, or the Aviation Subcommittee Staff Director Holly Woodruff Lyons at 202-226-3220, should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Mica". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop that extends to the left and then curves back to the right, crossing over itself.

John L. Mica
Chairman