



D.C. REEVES
Mayor

April 16, 2024

The Honorable Rick Scott
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Screening Operations at Pensacola International Airport

Dear Senator Scott,

I am writing to you today seeking assistance in what is becoming a prevailing problem at Pensacola International Airport.

PNS, a designated Small Hub airport serving 20 non-stop destinations, is the largest airport between New Orleans and Jacksonville. We host eight airlines - American, Delta, Frontier, Silver, Spirit, Southwest, United, and next month, Breeze Airways.

PNS recovered pre-COVID passenger counts within one year of pandemic onset. Since the recovery, PNS has experienced sustained explosive growth with approximately 3 million passengers annually. While the growth is positive, a painful and significant weakness affecting those choosing to travel from PNS recently is the inconsistent time required to pass through TSA security.

When passenger wait times exceed predetermined and reportable timelines, TSA must report these to the TSA Airport Operations Center. In 2023 alone, PNS made the TSA's national "Hot Spot" notification list 14 times. On some of those 14 days, we made the list twice in one day.

Now in 2024, PNS has been reported nationally already on four occasions, worse than last year's pace and the heavy summer travel season still ahead.

It is now beginning to hurt our reputation in reliability. We have been made aware that airlines have started included electronic warnings to passengers that PNS is "experiencing longer wait times than usual causing travelers to miss their flights."

The negative impact doesn't stop there. The physical constraints of the Airport facility have resulted in queuing lines commonly extending to parts of the airport not designed for travel-related public access. On multiple occasions over the last two years, queuing lines have approached the point of being extended outside the building. This situation becoming an almost daily occurrence, and growing worse, potentially poses a life-safety element issue.



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It is readily apparent during these times that TSA personnel levels are not resourced properly. Even though TSA screening forecasts are deliberate, analytic and for the most part, accurate down to the hour, in practice, screening lanes remain unmanned and underutilized.

Although the modern updated screening equipment is in place, personnel levels appear far short of the requirement. With little room to absorb callouts of personnel coupled with the occasional maintenance issue, the fine margins of operating the PNS security checkpoint are routinely compromised. Anecdotally, with four security lanes/equipment available, it is not uncommon to see queuing lines extending outside of the terminal queuing space with one or two of the security lines being manned and operated.

Additionally, although TSA publicly promotes a two-hour show time for passengers, TSA does not open the checkpoint until 3:45 a.m. with the first daily departure at 5:15 a.m., thus resulting in an immediate surge requirement at the start of each day for every element of the airport operation.

The bottom line is that PNS does not have the necessary TSA resourcing to meet demand, resulting in longer than expected wait times, missed flights, and a less than effective airport operation. To that end, we would urge TSA to resource PNS with a National Deployment Force of at least 10 Transportation Security Officers (TSO's) and its requisite leadership to better deal with the continued and systemic issues at PNS. Additionally, any efforts to afford PNS a Scheduling Optimization Team visit to analyze potential operational efficiencies would also be welcomed.

Talking with the Airport Team at PNS, they certainly value the strong partnership with the local TSA team and especially with their Federal Security Director. They also truly look forward to further growing together as a Team in support of all Northwest Floridians and their treasured visitors.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and we look forward to working with the TSA Team in our combined future endeavors. I am pleading that something be done to help this vital part of our region.

Sincerely,

D.C. Reeves, Mayor
City of Pensacola