

**PORT OF SEATTLE**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**COMMISSION AGENDA**

**Item No.** 7b

**STAFF BRIEFING**

**Date of Meeting** January 8, 2013

**DATE:** December 28, 2012  
**TO:** Tay Yoshitani, Chief Executive Officer  
**FROM:** Wendy Reiter, Director, Aviation Security  
Dave Soike, Director, Aviation Facilities and Capital Program  
**SUBJECT:** Future Baggage Handling at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (Airport)

**SYNOPSIS:**

This briefing will contrast the differences in baggage system development in the past and present, and discuss a recent planning effort to identify necessary baggage handling changes to accommodate long term passenger growth here at the Airport. The briefing will also discuss Transportation Security Administration (TSA) projects that have shorter term implications. If each effort moved ahead independently, then the Airport would go through another painful period of federal security renovations similar to what happened between 2001 and 2006.

As a result, Airport staff are working with the TSA to meet its near-term need to upgrade baggage screening facilities while also finding ways to fold that project (and funding) into necessary long term planning for the Airport-wide baggage system required to support long-term passenger needs – as much as twice today’s demand. The TSA work involves replacing baggage scanning machines along with conveyor systems that feed the machines. Past experience tells us that this work will be invasive and disruptive to travelers, airlines, and adjacent Airport operations. This TSA work is necessary and must move ahead.

However the shorter term TSA changes only affect part of the bag system, and therefore do not adequately advance capacity to meet future Airport needs. If the TSA machines are replaced in their current locations, much of that investment will be “thrown away” when we build new baggage handling/screening capacity to handle passenger growth. In order to ensure that both TSA and airport investments have the longest lifespan possible and are cost effectively jointly planned, Airport staff needs to cooperatively work with the TSA over the next six months to two years to plan and design baggage improvements to respond to long term needs and to benefit both parties.

**BACKGROUND:**

The TSA approached the Airport last year with their plan to replace all of the federally owned and operated security baggage-scanning machines that are approaching the end of their lifespan. The TSA is deploying newer machines with improved technology that operate at a faster rate, which enables the agency to reduce the number of machines. Fewer machines enable federal operation and maintenance costs to decrease. However, when the newer, faster machines are

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installed, they require significant conveyor changes that reach out into the facility beyond just the immediate area of the machines. In addition, many of these machines are “encased” by a labyrinth of conveyor systems. These ancillary conveyor changes also necessitate facility changes.

The Airport currently processes approximately 33 million passengers and their bags over the course of a year. The overall maximum capacity of the Airport is projected at approximately 60 million annual passengers. Air traffic continues to grow, and while the future annual rate of growth is unknown, it can be predicted that the Airport will reach maximum capacity over the next two to three decades. The Airport’s current baggage system capacity may reach its maximum capacity in this decade. It is certain that the Airport’s baggage system will need to be upgraded and expanded in the future to meet the ultimate capacity of the Airport.

In the first half of 2012, the Airport and TSA collaborated on a study to identify alternatives for replacing the existing federally owned and operated security baggage-scanning machines. After review of that study, the TSA returned in December and suggested that the Port and TSA engage in further concept planning and preliminary design during the next six months.

### **OTHER DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS BRIEFING:**

- Supplement – PowerPoint Presentation

### **PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS:**

- May 10, 2012 – TSA’s interest in a national recapitalization and optimization plan for all baggage screening operations was referenced in a design authorization request for the C60 – C61 Baggage Handling System Modifications Project.
- June 26, 2012 – The Airport’s baggage system were discussed during a briefing on Terminal Development Challenges.
- August 7, 2012 – Baggage system recapitalization was referenced as one of the drivers for the need to develop an Airport Sustainability Master Plan.
- August 14, 2012 – Baggage system recapitalization was noted in the 2013 Business Plan and Capital Briefing as a significant capital project not included in 2012-16 capital program.