

PORT OF SEATTLE
MEMORANDUM

COMMISSION AGENDA
STAFF BRIEFING

Item No. 7a

Date of Meeting October 11, 2016

DATE: September 23, 2016
TO: Ted Fick, Chief Executive Officer
FROM: Wendy Reiter, Director Security
Daniel Zenk, Senior Manager – Airport Operations
SUBJECT: Airport Security Checkpoint Queue Management Wait Time Briefing

SYNOPSIS

The Commission briefing will provide details of progress made in the past six months to reduce airport security checkpoint wait times through the use of contract personnel in strategic positions, such as queue management and in Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Additionally, staff will present efficiency improvements made to the checkpoint queue configurations.

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the airport experienced a 13% growth in the number of passengers using its terminal facility. In 2016, it is forecast the growth will increase an additional 9%, reaching a volume of over 46 million passengers per year. In the summer of 2015, the airport experienced higher than normal passenger wait times at its security checkpoints. Wait times were often around 40-45 minutes on average with maximum wait times reaching around 75 minutes on occasion. The increase was primarily due to the higher volume of passengers traveling during peak hours (4am to 2pm-daily) and an inability to increase staffing levels to handle the rapid growth.

In February 2016, airport security checkpoints began to experience higher and higher wait times, due to an increase in passenger volumes and flight activity. Port staff in collaboration with TSA and the airlines formed an action task force to examine possible ways to reduce passenger wait times and improve efficiency at all checkpoints. As a result, in April 2016, the Port Commissioners approved an emergency procurement for staff to enlist the services of a private contractor (HSS) and add resources for security checkpoint queue management. The scope of the contract included HSS to provide 90 employees to support the increase passenger volume and to help reduce wait times at each checkpoint. The contract positions identified in the scope were as follows:

1. Divesting Officer (DO) – TSA certified position
2. Revesting Officer (RO) – non-certified position
3. Queue managers – front of line position
4. Diverter – load balancing position

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In May 2016, HSS hired and trained 90 employees in each of the identified positions and began service. Checkpoint wait times dropped immediately from an average of 40-45 minutes to approximately 20-25 minutes in duration. Staff quickly learned that supplementing TSA with additional divesting officers allowed for more security screening lanes to open and wait times to be reduced. Before HSS began, TSA was opening 18-20 screening lanes. After HSS, TSA was able to place officers in position to open 24-28 lanes during peak hours. Additionally, the Port conducted a four day efficiency event (LEAN event) to identify other areas of improvement. The event offered opportunities to identify; test; and implement greater efficiencies in the following areas:

1. Queue configurations and use of K9 teams
2. Divesting areas
3. Revesting areas
4. Load balancing

Implementation to correct the inefficiencies yielded an additional reduction of passenger wait times. Average wait times dropped from approximately 20-25 minutes to about 17-20 minutes.

In June 2016, and as a result of the LEAN event, staff requested additional 30 HSS employees (a total of 120 employees) to further help with efficiency in queue management and in preparation for the August (the busiest month of the year). Additional positions needed were at the Ticket Document Check (TDC) podiums, in the queue line to assist passengers with pre-divesting preparation, and additional divesting officer positions.

In August 2016, the airport experienced a record high passenger volume of over 67,000 passengers per day. A majority of those passengers went through the checkpoints during peak hours and the wait times averaged approximate 12 minutes.

In September 2016, due to the decrease in passenger traffic, HSS has reduced staffing levels in queue management positions from 120 to 50 employees. The focus for HSS through the end of the year will be to provide employees in the divesting officer position and give TSA the flexibility to open additional screening lanes when needed.

HSS contract will expire Jan 7, 2017. They will provide services throughout the upcoming Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year holidays. They will be focusing on divesting only while Port Staff – Pathfinders will be backfilling the queue management.

Overall, Port staff in collaboration with TSA and the airlines learned that adding staff to the divesting officer position allows for additional screening lanes to open and a reduction in passenger wait times. Additional staff at the TDC podiums, revesting area, in the queue and at the front of the line improves customer service and reduces wait times, but only minimally.

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ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- PowerPoint presentation

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

- April 19, 2016 – Approval for an emergency hire of HSS to provide queue management services.