



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No. 7a

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting September 8, 2020

DATE: August 20, 2020
TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director
FROM: Lance Lyttle, Aviation Division Managing Director
Julie Collins, Aviation Customer Experience Director
SUBJECT: FlyHealthy@SEA Airport Recovery Briefing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This briefing will provide a comprehensive overview of the ongoing work at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In late April, SEA established the multi-layered FlyHealthy@SEA program to ensure a healthy and safe environment for customers and employees. The briefing will update the commission on several aspects of this work including the release of the FlyHealthy@SEA Action Plan and the outcomes from the May 12, 2020, motion directing airport staff to explore the implementation of temperature checks.

A significant aspect of this exploration was conducting two “proof of concept” equipment testing initiatives where 10,000 passengers (both arriving and departing) were voluntarily screened. Key insights were identified through the testing including the needed contracted staffing levels (up to 60 positions), potential costs (a range of \$10 million annually) and equipment performance (challenges with hats and glasses). The test results did not indicate any passenger with an elevated temperature above 100.4 degrees. While there are no current plans for SEA to establish an ongoing temperature check program, the lessons learned from the Port Commission’s Motion 2020-11 will certainly inform any future airport health screening initiatives and provide a valuable foundation for airlines who conduct further testing.

BACKGROUND

The unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on the travel industry, and specifically in the aviation sector, are widely reported. The airport plays a vital role in the national and international travel ecosystem, as well as serving as an essential hub of economic activity and job creation in our region. As a primary economic driver in Washington state, our highest priority is ensuring the health and safety for people at the airport.

Since hitting a 95% drop in passenger volume in April 2020 compared to April 2019, we are seeing a gradual return of travelers at SEA. The average of 17,000 – 19,000 passengers per day through the security checkpoints reached in mid-July has remained at a similar level over the past month.

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This represents between a 73% - 75% drop in passenger volumes compared to the same timeframe in 2019. Looking ahead, we anticipate passenger volumes dipping lower (as customarily occurs in September) once school resumes in the Fall.

According to daily measurements from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) of passengers passing through security checkpoints, SEA has an average reduction in volume compared to 2019 among the 40 largest commercial airports in the U.S. As reference, here is the reduction in passenger volumes when comparing August 19, 2020, and August 19, 2019, at some of the nation’s largest airports:

Boston	(85.8%)	Seattle	(75%)
San Francisco	(85.6%)	Orlando	(74.6%)
New York JFK	(85.5%)	Atlanta	(74%)
Washington Dulles	(81.5%)	Houston IAH	(71.4%)
Miami	(78.7%)	Las Vegas	(69.4%)
Los Angeles LAX	(77.8%)	Fort Lauderdale	(68.5%)
Chicago O’Hare	(77.2%)	Dallas-Fort Worth	(66.7%)
Newark	(76.9%)	Phoenix	(64.2%)
		Denver	(63%)

The trend of leisure travelers returning more quickly to the air than business travelers is evident and international air travel remains extremely limited. Airlines continue to adjust their schedules frequently to match demand and the flattening of passenger volumes also reflect the return of COVID-19 “hot spots” in various parts of the U.S.

From the start of the pandemic, the Port has fully embraced its responsibility to communicate factually and frequently with customers. While air travel inherently involves some close physical contact with other travelers and employees, the Port and our tenants and partners have taken many steps to create a safe and healthy environment. From the recent “proof of concept” voluntary temperature testing, it appears that travelers are heeding the advice to stay home if they are feeling sick. And, port staff continue to be vigilant in adhering to the evolving health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

FLY HEALTHY@SEA ACTION PLAN:

Given the unprecedented challenge facing our airport, we recognized the importance of creating a FlyHealthy@SEA Action Plan to guide our work. The Action Plan enables the airport to clearly communicate internally and externally about what we’ve accomplished, the work underway, and how we are looking ahead to proactively tackle the “what ifs.” We have established five strategies, with clear milestones, that reflect the multi-layered nature of this work; and the FlyHealthy@SEA Action Plan reinforces our sense of urgency, the need for flexibility, and the accountability to ensure a safe and healthy travel journey.

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The first edition of this report will be shared internally, with airport stakeholders and posted on the Port's website online on September 8, 2020. The FlyHealthy@SEA Action Plan describes the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on air travel, the goals of the SEA program and the actions associated with restoring customer confidence. Here are some highlights:

FlyHealthy@SEA - Completed Actions (Spring 2020):

- Enhanced the airport's cleaning protocols (increased cleaning of high-touch surfaces, installed over 250 hand sanitizers).
- Adapted the terminal for physical distancing changes and messaging (installed over 250 plastic protective barriers, added over 5,000 stickers-decals-signs to promote physical distancing, produced overhead announcements and digital signage throughout the airport, created more space in eating areas and in security queues).
- Established a facial coverings requirement on May 18, 2020.
- Maintained operations for essential airport support services (i.e. airport dining and retail financial relief).
- Influenced federal policy developments in securing \$192 million in CARES Act funding.
- Produced numerous updates for travelers about airport conditions disseminated through the Port's website, social media, blogs, a new FlyHealthy@SEA electronic newsletter, press coverage, the SEA app, and in-person assistance by phone and in the terminal.
- established the SEA Partners Group to provide a collaborative forum for airport stakeholders; and
- Launched a pre-book parking program to provide ease of parking and touchless options to travelers.

FlyHealthy@SEA - Actions Underway (Summer/Fall 2020):

- Added 8,000 physical distancing stickers to the 16,000 seats in the gate waiting areas.
- Screened over 10,000 passengers in two voluntary temperature check test pilots.
- Distributed over 6,500 face mask "care kits" (to-date) through the Mask Up SEA initiative.
- Replaced over 200 restroom paper towel dispensers with a touchless model.
- Secured software to start transition of common use ticket kiosks to touchless.
- Researching touchless technologies, in concert with airports around the world, to identify best practices.
- Partnering with Governor Jay Inslee's office, public health agencies, the airlines and commercial airports across the state to establish consistent health standards.
- Establishing a collaborative partnership with YVR (Vancouver, B.C. Airport) and the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) to evaluate research and best practices for potential future initiatives; and
- Testing new cleaning equipment that sanitizes escalator handrails, low-to-the-ground areas (such as under waiting area chairs and screening equipment), and electro-static sprayers.

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LOOKING FORWARD:

SEA continues to work closely with other airports to share best practices and to anticipate changes that may impact how we serve our customers. The Commission meeting presentation will elaborate on some of the key topics below:

- **Enhanced Cleaning:** the airport’s janitorial staff leaders and contractors continue to explore a wide variety of cleaning methods and new technologies given the close connection between cleanliness and health. Significant financial resources (roughly \$6 million) will continue to be devoted to this work in 2021 with some costs eligible for federal reimbursements and others borne by the Port. Additionally, we are testing customer feedback technology that utilizes a QR code and enables staff to better track satisfaction and to quickly respond when a restroom needs added attention.
- **Health Screenings:** In response to the Port Commission’s Motion 2020-11 on May 12, 2020, airport staff took significant steps to explore implementation of a temperature check program at SEA. We conducted two “proof of concept” equipment testing initiatives where 10,000 passengers (both arriving and departing) were screened. Key insights were identified through the testing including the needed contracted staffing levels (up to 60 positions), potential costs (a range of \$10 million annually) and equipment performance (challenges with hats and glasses). The test results did not indicate any passenger with an elevated temperature above 100.4 degrees.

In discussions with the few other large airports (e.g. LAX) who are exploring temperature checks, they report similar findings. Airlines are also conducting some equipment tests as well and have the authority that airports lack to deny boarding, if appropriate. While there are no current plans for SEA to establish an ongoing temperature check program, the lessons learned from the Port Commission’s Motion 2020-11 will certainly inform any future airport health screening initiatives and provide a valuable foundation for airlines who conduct further testing.

It is important to note that in May, a base assumption was that elevated temperatures were a top indicator for COVID-19 and that a consistent, federally managed program would ultimately be established at airports across the U.S. While it is recognized that many customers like the assurance that temperatures are being checked, the growing prevalence of “asymptomatic” cases is shifting the focus away from temperature screening as an effective prevention tool. Staff will continually monitor developments in this arena and is exploring a variety of paths to build partnerships with other public agencies, airports, airlines, and tenants.

- **Touchless Technology:** COVID-19 is accelerating a trend that was already underway in airports toward the use of touchless technology. The recent introduction of the SEA pre-book parking system and added features on the SEA app (such as the map with every hand sanitizer location) are delivering services in a touchless manner. Currently, airport innovation and

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technology leaders are securing software to enable some of the common use ticket kiosks to print baggage tags without touching the machine. SEA is also working with its airport dining tenants and a contractor to develop a shared ordering app. We are also exploring touchless solutions for bigger challenges, such as creating virtual security queues. We recently issued a Request for Information (RFP) and received responses from 13 companies. There is a wide range of technology under review that represents tremendous future opportunities.

- **Airport Accreditations:** A recent development is the introduction of third-party accreditations to assess and advise on best practices related to COVID-19 responses. The airport is currently pursuing two accreditations. The Airports Council International (ACI) offers to its airport members a health accreditation based on an assessment of how aligned their health measures are with the ACI Aviation Business Restart and Recovery guidelines and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council Aviation Restart Task Force (CART) recommendations. The Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) is an accreditation considered to be the gold standard for janitorial practices.
- **Customer Feedback:** Incorporating public feedback, and adjusting actions as needed, is a critical aspect of the FlyHealthy@SEA program. Public outreach was conducted in July through the Port's communication channels with over 900 respondents. SEA also participated in a national survey. The top results in both indicate that customers prioritize face covering compliance and abundant hand sanitizers as essential assurances for returning to air travel. The port is also providing airport tours and seeking feedback from civic leaders, elected officials, and corporate travel managers.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS,

July 28, 2020 – Port of Seattle Commission briefing on Airport Recovery (FlyHealthy@SEA)

May 12, 2020 – Port of Seattle Commission briefing on Airport Recovery (FlyHealthy@SEA)

May 12, 2020 – Commission Motion 2020-11 (A Motion to direct the Executive Director to develop and implement a plan for health screening of travelers at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, and to advocate for a national system of airport health screening.)

April 28, 2020 – Port of Seattle Commission briefing on Early Action Recovery Plan

April 28, 2020 – The Port Commission approved Motion 2020-09 (A Motion to authorize short-term changes to the 2020-2024 Capital Improvement Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic)

April 14, 2020 – Port of Seattle briefing on Federal CARES Act Update

April 1, 2020 – The Commission approved Motion 2020-06 (A Motion to provide guidance for Port leadership in prioritizing Port investments to assist local, regional, and statewide economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.)

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April 1, 2020 – The Commission approved Motion 2020-07 (A Motion to provide immediate relief and support to Port employees and Port tenants and concessionaires.)