

Remarks for May 10, 2022 TSA Forum at DFW Airport

Thank you to TSA for putting this event together and to DFW Airport for hosting.

Before I begin, I want to congratulate Administrator Pekoske on your nomination to a second term. You have our strong support for a swift confirmation. The partnerships you've built with all of us, Mr. Administrator, allow us to work collaboratively to keep air travel safe and secure.

I'd like to say how appreciative our members and I have been for the extraordinary work that TSA does every day, dealing with every situation imaginable.

I say thank you every time I go through security screening, and I mean it.

I represent the segment of air travel that operates 43% of the flights and our members provide the only source of air service to over two-thirds of the country. On regional airlines, passengers from smaller communities can access the hubs and travel beyond and around the globe.

Safety is always the top focus for our member airlines and that will never change.

We're glad to see the rebound of travel and a healthier industry overall. Our members will continue our work to ensure a healthy, safe and reliable travel experience to every corner of the country as we move into the summer.

One of the priorities TSA emphasizes consistently is investment in your workforce, so security staffing can meet demand as it swiftly returns. As we prepare for the peak summer travel season, the issue of workforce investment and supply deserves special focus.

While demand is strong, I want to acknowledge we are grappling with a real and worsening pilot shortage that is challenging us across the industry to fully meet that demand. TSA throughput numbers show passengers from small airports have returned in strong numbers, yet more than 70% of U.S. airports have less air

service today than they did in 2019. Much of this capacity is being extracted from regional routes to smaller communities, which were hit first and worst by the pilot shortage. These schedule trims will minimize disruptions to passengers during travel, but we know they reduce choices for passengers, as planes are grounded and cities lose flights.

I applaud Congress, the Biden Administration and DOT Secretary Buttigieg for investing in workforce development grants to help spark interest in aviation.

We need that.

We can and should do more. RAA is working tirelessly on the pilot shortage issue, with more to come in the weeks ahead. A unified approach is critical and we're working on initiatives to make that happen so summer travelers can get to their destinations.

We want travel to return to as much normal as we can get, and that includes revisiting travel restrictions implemented during the acute stages of Covid, before we understood transmission and before we had the benefit of vaccination. As we enter a new era of covid, our policies must keep pace with the science.

As we gear up for summer travel, we ask our passengers to partner with us as well. Air travel makes the world smaller. It reduces isolation and connects us to one another. Please be kind to your fellow travelers and frontline workers along the way.

Our industry is resilient and smart and always capable of accepting the next challenge.

As we prepare for a strong summer season, we are hard at work promoting workforce investments to help meet the strong demand and to rebuild small community air service.

Thank you again, Mr. Administrator, for your responsiveness and all you do for aviation security. And thanks again to TSA for the invitation to be here.