

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
PROTECTION, HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

“MANAGING RISK AND INCREASING EFFICIENCY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGISTERED TRAVELER PROGRAM”

JULY 31, 2007

Good morning Madame Chair and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Bill Connors, and it is my honor to testify before you today on behalf of the membership of the National Business Travel Association (NBTA).

As the authoritative voice of the business travel community, NBTA represents more than 2,500 corporate travel managers and travel service providers who collectively manage and direct more than \$170 billion of expenditures within the business travel industry, primarily for Fortune 1000 companies.

NBTA Support for Registered Traveler

NBTA believes that Registered Traveler (RT) programs enable a more secure, faster, and more consistent screening process. This, in turn, enables the more than 6 million frequent business travelers to be more productive while enhancing the security of our nation.

As a result, NBTA has been a strong supporter of the RT concept since its inception. We have participated in the original DHS pilots at airports in Minneapolis, Boston and Washington, DC. In fact, I was a member of the RT pilot program here at Reagan National Airport.

Throughout the public policy debate on RT, NBTA has consistently advocated 6 key points which we believe are the keys to success:

- Voluntary participation (opt-in)
- Broad availability
- Interoperability between airports and between RT providers
- Demonstrably expedited screening provided in a designated lane without slowing other travelers
- Robust protection of data collected as part of Registered Traveler enrollment
- Public understanding of the benefits offered by Registered Traveler, the costs associated with participation, and the security check process

NBTA Assessment of Where we are Today

In assessing these six points today, NBTA believes progress is well underway on all of them.

Three of those--voluntary participation, interoperability and protection of data are all built in to the TSA RT business model.

Three others—broad availability, demonstrably expedited screening in a designated lane, and public understanding of the costs and benefits—are all works in progress. Let me go into each of these in a little more detail.

Broad Availability

One of the keys to having RT realize its potential to more predictably and securely move travelers through airports is having the program reach sufficient scale. That is, travelers to top airports should have access to RT programs on all legs of their trip. While there is some value in being able to use this program on even one part of a business trip, our members are keenly watching to see the program grow to all major airports, thereby adding predictability throughout more of a business trip.

Today, several airports are currently online with registered traveler programs

- JFK, with three terminals offering programs
- Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport
- Indianapolis International Airport
- San Jose International Airport
- Orlando International Airport
- Reno Tahoe International Airport
- Terminal B at Newark

Other airports are in the final stages of building out their RT programs, having already selected a vendor:

- San Francisco
- Albany
- Westchester County Airport
- LaGuardia
- Little Rock

Additionally, several airports are having RT services built now, or looking to acquire them, including

- Huntsville International Airport
- Los Angeles International
- O'Hare
- Denver
- Miami
- Washington Dulles
- Washington National

It's interesting to note that while we speak, the Washington DC area airports are considering bids from approved RT vendors to roll out the program here in our area, with Baltimore expected to follow suit soon thereafter.

Demonstrably Expedited Screening

When talking to business travelers about their reasons for seeking an RT card, one stands above all others—predictability in moving through the airport, curb to curb. They expect these designated security checkpoints to allow them to move more quickly and efficiently through the airport, bypassing the long lines often created by infrequent travelers who are unfamiliar with checkpoint security procedures. While many people believe that the so called “big three” security benefits of RT—keeping laptops in bags, keeping coats on and keeping shoes on—are the keys to demonstrably expediting screening, we would add the following perspective. While these three items would surely speed business travelers through checkpoints, what our members have already adapted their flying habits to account for these procedures.

From the frequent business traveler perspective, the key to moving through checkpoints today is traveler behavior and familiarity—or lack thereof—on how to rapidly move through the TSA checkpoint. To the degree that RT lanes are used by frequent business travelers who know how to efficiently move through the checkpoint, that in and of itself is a benefit of the program.

Therefore, as RT vendors test and deploy new technologies that allow travelers to keep their laptops in their bags, and keep their shoes and jackets on, we hope that the new technology will not slow down the travel experience of our members moving through RT lanes today.

Public understanding of the costs and benefits

The last point NBTA would like to make is on the public understanding of the costs and benefits of the RT program. This is an area where both the RT vendors and the TSA leadership have a responsibility. In this vein, we have some recommendations for both sides on how they can be more effective.

On the private sector side, we feel confident that all of the vendors do a great job touting the benefits of their own programs—and that’s to be expected. As vendors invest in security enhancing technology and use it to gain market share, we will be on the lookout for any confusion that might arise in the marketplace, particularly around the issue of interoperability of RT systems.

Our final issue in the area of public understanding is the role of the federal government. While this is a private sector program overseen by the government, the TSA has an important role to play in supporting the concept of RT. It is, we believe, perfectly aligned with the risk management philosophy espoused by the Administration and homeland security experts. However, we often hear inconsistent messages out of TSA—some wholeheartedly supporting the program, others casting doubt on the value of background checks performed, others focusing on the investments RT service providers will have to make in order to have customers realize security benefits.

These varied messages can create confusion among the public and make many of us in the private sector doubt TSA’s commitment to the program. We certainly hope that TSA and DHS will soon consistently deliver strong public messages of support for RT, and save deliberations on program improvements for private conversations with stakeholders.

The Future of RT

While we believe the forecast for the growth of RT is quite rosy, there are several areas where NBTA believes additional attention is warranted.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, we expect the number of airports with RT programs to grow to most, if not all, of the top airports in the nation, thereby providing true value for business travelers. With such a critical mass of airports involved, we believe certified RT services providers will begin to more aggressively work with the employer community to expand opportunities to enroll in the program, perhaps by locating kiosks in corporate headquarters, hotels, convention centers and the like. By taking steps like these to make enrollment more widespread, momentum can be built to encourage additional airports to contract with RT services providers.

Additionally, the government and private sector RT vendors should give strong consideration to enhancing efficiency at airport checkpoints by auto enrolling in the program segments of the population that are known to pose negligible security risks. Federal workers with security clearances, members of the Transportation Worker Identity Credential program, and enrollees in the U.S.-Canada NEXUS program—are good examples of such populations who should almost automatically be included in RT, given the security checks they have already undergone.

Third, we would like to note that an increasing percentage of a business traveler's time is spent visiting growing foreign markets. In recognition of this trend, the Senate passed version of H.R. 2368, the 2008 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill, included provisions by Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) to authorize an International Registered Traveler (IRT) Program. Like the domestic program we have been discussing today, the IRT program would expedite the security checks for frequent international travelers traveling to the United States. We hope that all the House and Senate conferees will support this provision and include it in the DHS appropriations bill that is eventually sent to the President.

Finally, we would remind the committee that RT is one program within a layered security system governing our air transportation network. When deployed in conjunction with Secure Flight, the soon to be announced government effort to vet unknown travelers, RT is a key part of build both efficiency and security into our system. We certainly hope that TSA soon moves to deploy the long-delayed Secure Flight program and utilizes it effectively, from both security and privacy perspectives.

Madame Chair, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to come before you today and provide the views of the business travelers, corporate travel managers and travel service providers on the Registered Traveler program.