UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Travel and Tourism Advisory Board applauds your interest in the Secure Travel Partnership ("STP") concept we advanced at our last meeting. This umbrella branding of leading government security programs will provide a greater understanding of how these programs work; how they keep Americans and visitors safe; how they can be harmonized and improved; and how they directly lead to a better, more secure travel experience. We look forward to continuing a constructive dialogue with you about how to make the STP fully operational.

The Secure Travel Partnership Operations subcommittee has taken on your direction to recommend an action item that would represent an impactful, prioritized next step. While there are many government programs that should in time be considered and more fully developed within the framework of the Secure Travel Partnership, we believe that the successful deployment of biometric facial recognition technology would be an excellent place to begin.

As part of a demonstration program, CBP has currently deployed biometric facial recognition technology at a single gate at eight U.S. international airports. CBP plans to implement an integrated biometric entry/exit process that provides significant benefits to air travel partners in addition to meeting the longstanding Congressional mandate for a biometric exit system. For many government officials, successfully implementing a biometric exit system is a prerequisite to future expansion of the Visa Waiver Program, which brings the United States nearly 60% of its international visitors.

The use of biometric facial recognition technology holds the promise of a future end-to-end process, from check-in to departure, in which biometrics replace boarding passes and other identification documents throughout the security and boarding process. This would enhance the security of the process while making the travel experience more efficient and seamless for travelers. The TTAB has seen this technology and is excited about its potential to transform travel and security and open the door to more U.S. visitation from those who pose no threat.

Recommendations

The TTAB recommends that you communicate your support for the use of facial recognition biometrics to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security as a system for confirming traveler identity, solving the exit problem, and improving the travel experience as an Administration priority. We recommend that you charge the relevant agencies and the key stakeholders in the private sector to accelerate progress in implementing this system and direct the NTTO and the TTAB to provide their active support for and ongoing engagement in this initiative.

We specifically recommend that you:

- Use your position as Secretary of Commerce and TPC Chair to drive alignment within the Administration and throughout the industry on the need to prioritize and implement facial recognition biometrics.
- Urge the public and private sectors to strive to seek agreement on cost, privacy, integration, timeline, and other issues that could prevent the timely deployment of this promising technology.

Roles and Responsibilities

Your support for this technology will spur action toward finding alignment among key stakeholders, including the Departments of Homeland Security, Transportation and State, and the airport, airline and traveler community, who generally agree that facial recognition biometrics hold great promise for enhancing security and facilitating travel, but who may differ on a variety of issues related to deployment. Increasing the involvement and collaboration of the private and public sectors will accelerate the progress on implementing this promising technology.

The TTAB has a proven track record of bringing diverse stakeholders within the public and private sectors together to consider and recommend solutions to improving travel.

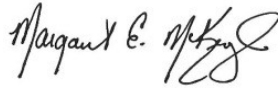## Breaking Development on Trusted Travel Programs

Mr. Secretary, in a recent speech, TSA Administrator David Pekoske advanced the idea that merging the TSA's PreCheck program with CBP's Global Entry program would streamline management of the two operations, and with better integration, potentially enhance security. Mr. Pekoske said that he and Kevin McAleenan, acting CBP Commissioner, were taking a "good, hard look" at merging the two programs, which could enable the two agencies to increase enrollment and invest in new technology, like biometric facial recognition, that could be used across both platforms. The TTAB strongly endorses the concept of such a combination and has made recommendations to this effect to your predecessors. These fine trusted traveler programs, which significantly enhance the travel experience, would achieve an even higher level of excellence and adoption if they were thoughtfully combined and better understood. We recommend that you encourage TSA and CBP to pursue the merger of PreCheck and Global Entry as an enhancement of the Secure Travel Partnership.

The TTAB appreciates your leadership and looks forward to the opportunity to work in partnership with you and the NTTO in developing the Secure Travel Partnership and in securing the full deployment of facial recognition biometrics and the merger of the TSA PreCheck and CBP Global Entry programs as priority projects.

Respectfully submitted,

John Sprouls
Chair

Margaret McKeough
Vice Chair

Greg Stubblefield
Vice Chair