

MOTION 2020-11:
A MOTION OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION

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.

ADOPTED
MAY 12, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 global pandemic is an unprecedented public health emergency that impacts the lives of every local resident. The Port of Seattle's top priorities during this difficult time are keeping employees, tenants, concessionaires, contractors, workers, customers, travelers and residents safe, while simultaneously keeping our critical aviation and maritime infrastructure operating to support jobs, small and diverse businesses, and environmental sustainability.

In particular, the Commission believes that every reasonable measure – including but not limited to temperature checks for international arriving passengers and travelers departing through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints – should be taken to ensure the health and safety of everyone who works at, travels through or visits Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA). These efforts will not only slow the spread of COVID-19, but also restore confidence in air travel, which is key to the economic recovery of the Port and the region.

While a national system of health screening is the best and most efficient way to institute these protocols, it will take time for a consensus path forward to be agreed to and implemented. Therefore, the Port will need to facilitate an interim solution for SEA until that time, working closely with local and state public health officials and other partners.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

The Port of Seattle Commission hereby directs the Executive Director to:

- 1) Develop a plan to facilitate temperature screenings for passengers departing through TSA checkpoints and those who have been cleared by U.S. Customs and Border Protection after an international arrival. This plan should be created in collaboration with local and state public health officials, use best practices learned from existing programs at other airports, and take full advantage of any partnership opportunities available. In the interest of the safety of King County and Washington state communities, staff should prioritize implementation of temperature screening

procedures for internationally arriving passengers. The Executive Director should report back to the Commission by June 9, 2020 on implementation progress.

- 2) Engage local, state and federal stakeholders from throughout the aviation industry and related stakeholders to advocate for a national system of health screening for air travelers. In developing a system for enhanced health screenings of internationally arriving passengers, staff should work with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and as well as local and state public health officials to incorporate a system of providing data relevant to expanding contact tracing efforts undertaken by these agencies.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION

The impacts of COVID-19 at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) have resulted in a 95% reduction in passenger volumes between April 2019 and April 2020. Currently, SEA has about 3,800 people passing through the checkpoints each day, compared to a daily average of 50,000 – 55,000 people in early May 2019. As the Stay Home, Stay Healthy restrictions are eased in Washington State, and similar restrictions are lifted across the country, SEA is preparing for travelers to return to the airport.

This work is multi-faceted and will occur in phases. The uncertain timing of widespread COVID-19 testing and a vaccine, and potential other health developments, will have a large influence on increases in passenger volumes. SEA is approaching these challenges with a three-pronged approach. First, working closely with the international airline and airport industry to establish consistent policies, standards and protocols will be essential. Second, airport staff is engaged with the port-wide efforts that Executive Director Steve Metruck and the Port of Seattle Executive Leadership Team are leading such as developing the Port's economic recovery plan and employee policies. And third, staff has developed the FlyHealthy@SEA program that is focused on restoring traveler confidence and assessing each step of the customer journey with heightened attention to health and safety.

The FlyHealthy@SEA program is responding to evolving customer expectations around health, cleanliness and physical distancing. Initially, this will require changes in the terminal including likely adjustments in the security queues, seating spaces and signage. Further work around cleanliness and addressing longer-term challenges like incorporating touchless technologies will also be priorities. And, we anticipate potential health initiatives, new public policies and customer-focused communication will be also be essential in restoring confidence.

The Port and SEA seek to employ a layered approach to public safety in the midst of a pandemic. No single measure is sufficient to slow the spread of coronavirus, and each comes with additional costs and inconvenience. However, given the gravity of the virus, and the impact it has had on our region's well-being, the benefits of these measures outweigh the costs.