

Security Screening for Public Charter Operations

Several Part 135 Public Charter Operations, the largest of which is JSX, have been selling tickets to the public as “hop-on” tickets, where a passenger is able to “stroll right in, just 20 minutes before your flight”¹ and get to a destination with less hassle than a traditional airline.

This should be disconcerting to all Americans. Our collective memory cannot be this short. Just over two decades ago, the United States endured a terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001, that was enabled by lax aviation security. This attack led to the deaths of nearly 3,000 innocent victims, thousands of injuries, and other immeasurable damage to lives, property, and prosperity. Following this attack, Congress enacted the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, making the Transportation Security Administration responsible for day-to-day security screening of passengers and bags in commercial air transportation, particularly for scheduled flights on which members of the public can easily purchase an individual ticket.

The Allied Pilots Association strongly supports a single security standard to be applied to the operation of **any** aircraft with more than nine seats, offering scheduled service, and selling individual tickets. Requiring passengers on some scheduled airlines to go through a TSA-operated checkpoint, while allowing other passengers on virtually identical scheduled airlines to bypass TSA and other critical security protocols, makes no sense and creates glaring security vulnerabilities that can be exploited by those who wish to cause harm. The TSA should take immediate action to ensure that passengers go through full TSA security processes when flying on an air carrier that operates aircraft with more than nine seats, publishes a flight schedule, and sells individual tickets.

The TSA must not wait on other agencies before addressing these vulnerabilities. The TSA has rightfully noted that scheduled public charter operators “have fixed routes and are selling boarding passes to individuals.” Similarly, the FAA recently observed that the “size, scope, frequency and complexity” of these public charters “has grown significantly over the past 10 years” and that many appear “essentially indistinguishable” from the scheduled passenger airline operations that follow standard safety and security rules and regulations. While the FAA appears poised to take action to address certain safety issues involving these operations, the TSA should not await action by another agency before acting on its important mandate to address transportation security vulnerabilities.

APA strongly supports the current TSA investigation into security protocols, or lack thereof, for scheduled “public charter flight” operations. APA also looks forward to the TSA investigating and closing significant security vulnerabilities as quickly as possible.

¹ <https://www.jsx.com/home/search>