

# TSA unveils passenger self-screening lanes at Vegas airport as 'a step into the future'

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New TSA screening equipment at Harry Reid International Airport is displayed, Wednesday, March 6, 2024, in Las Vegas. Credit: AP Photo/Ty O'Neil

Federal airport security officials unveiled passenger self-screening lanes Wednesday at busy Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas.

"How do we step into the future? This is a step," said a system designer, Dimitri Kusnezov, science and technology under secretary at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "The interface with people makes all the difference."

The Transportation Security Administration checkpoint—initially only in Las Vegas, only for TSA PreCheck customers and only using the English language—incorporates a screen with do-it-yourself instructions telling people how to smoothly pass themselves and their carry-on luggage through pre-flight [screening](#) with little or no help from uniformed TSA officers.

"We want to avoid passengers having to be patted down," said John Fortune, program manager of the Department of Homeland Security's ["Screening at Speed"](#) program and a developer with Kusnezov of the prototype.

Instead of a boxy belt-fed device using a stack of gray trays, the futuristic-looking baggage and personal belongings inspection system looks like a scaled-down starship medical magnetic resonance imaging machine.



A TSA official demonstrates new screening equipment at Harry Reid International Airport, Wednesday, March 6, 2024, in Las Vegas. Credit: AP Photo/Ty O'Neil

Travelers step into a separate clear glass body scanning booth with a [video display](#) inside showing how to stand when being sensed with what officials said is the type of "millimeter wave technology" already in use around the country. A reporter found it sensitive enough to identify a forgotten handkerchief in a pocket. He did not have to remove his shoes.

"Really, one of the main aims here is to allow individuals to get through the system without necessarily having to interact directly with an officer and ... at their own pace," said Christina Peach, a TSA administrator involved in the system design. "It's also about not feeling rushed."

Nationally, nearly all passengers who pay to enroll in the TSA PreCheck program pass through screening in 10 minutes or less, agency spokesman R. Carter Langston said, while regular traveler and carry-on screening takes about 30 minutes.

Peach said eight uniformed TSA officers might be needed to staff two lanes of the new system, compared with 12 officers in lanes today.



New TSA screening equipment at Harry Reid International Airport is displayed, Wednesday, March 6, 2024, in Las Vegas. AP Photo/Ty O'Neil)

However, Kusnezov and Karen Burke, TSA federal security director in Nevada, said agents including [union members](#) would just be freed from

hands-on screening to focus more attention on broader security concerns.

"No one is going to lose their job," Burke said.

Fortune declined to estimate the cost of designing the system, but he said the type of scanners used were similar to ones already deployed around the country.

Officials said they'll time how quickly travelers pass through the prototype during evaluations this year.

Testing is being done at a unique-in-the-nation "innovation checkpoint" that TSA unveiled in 2019 in a sprawling international arrivals terminal that opened in 2012 at Harry Reid airport. It already features screening lanes with instruction displays and estimated wait times.

"This change in technology is for people who want to get through a checkpoint faster," said Keith Jeffries, a former TSA director at Los Angeles International Airport and now vice president of K2 Security Screening Group, a company that installs screening systems at shipping ports including airports. "It'll be a great step, but I anticipate it will be for the experienced passengers."



A TSA official demonstrates new screening equipment at Harry Reid International Airport, Wednesday, March 6, 2024, in Las Vegas. Credit: AP Photo/Ty O'Neil

Jeffries, in an interview on Tuesday with The Associated Press, compared the new system to self-checkout lanes that were introduced in the 1980s and are now common at supermarkets across the nation. He recalled that some shoppers initially avoided scanning their own purchases.

"It's going to take time to educate the public," he said of the TSA screening lanes. "You're going to have a new generation of travelers that just wants to get through with the least amount of hassle and delay. I think eventually we'll see more and more of them."

Harry Reid International Airport was the seventh-busiest passenger airport in the U.S. in 2022, ranked by Airports Council International behind New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. In 2023, the Las Vegas airport handled a new [record of 57.6 million](#) arriving and departing passengers.

The Transportation Security Administration reported its busiest day ever at the airport last month, screening [nearly 104,000 travelers](#) and their luggage as they headed for airline flights Feb. 12, the day after the NFL Super Bowl was played at Allegiant Stadium.



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