

DEPARTMENT  
OF STATE  
AND  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
HOMELAND  
SECURITY

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13597:  
IMPROVEMENTS TO VISA  
PROCESSING AND FOREIGN  
VISITOR PROCESSING  
180-DAY PROGRESS REPORT



August 2012

## Executive Summary

First impressions are important. A foreign visitor's first and primary encounters with the U.S. government are often with the Departments of State (State) and Homeland Security (DHS), and these interactions shape visitors' opinions about the United States. Executive Order (EO) 13597 (issued January 19, 2012) initiated a focused, goal-driven coordinated policy to ensure that these first impressions are the best impressions—by building capacity, leveraging existing resources, and improving the visa application and entry processes without compromising security. From managing wait times to ensuring a high quality of interaction with Federal personnel, both Departments are on track to meet and exceed the Executive Order's goals.

State and DHS are working together and with other parts of the government to support the travel and tourism industry, a major driver of economic growth. Over the past six months, we have made significant progress in three key areas: increasing productivity and efficiency; improving the traveler's experience; and enhancing partnerships, both within the U.S. government and with the travel and tourism industry.

### *Productivity and Efficiency Measures*

State and DHS are focused on making the travel process as efficient as possible for visitors and residents, while increasing the government's operational productivity. State has increased visa processing capacity in high-demand markets through a combination of increased staffing, workload management and expansion of its facilities. Similarly, DHS uses technology enhancements and process improvements to increase its capacity to process visitors and other entrants to the United States at its ports of entry. Increased productivity and efficiency are essential to ensuring that the Departments can accommodate increased demand for their services as more travelers seek to visit the United States.

Increased staffing has been key to lower visa interview wait times. By the end of 2012, State will have created more than 50 new visa adjudicator positions in China and 60 in Brazil, including 43 hired under State's innovative Limited Non-career Appointment program. Between October 2011 and July 2012, State deployed, on temporary duty, 220 consular officers to Brazil (a 253 percent increase over the number of temporary officers sent the previous fiscal year) and 48 officers to China (a 60 percent increase). The additional staff enabled State to meet the 40 percent capacity increase target goal outlined in EO 13597 in Brazil in June 2012, and will enable State to meet that goal in China by December 2012.

Visa processing capacity in high-demand countries, particularly Brazil and China, has grown to meet sharply-rising demand. Consular managers in China are finding greater efficiencies and have expanded their work hours to maximize interview window use. Managers throughout Brazil's four consular sections have responded to a nearly 50 percent year-on-year increase in demand by expanding operating hours, including occasional Saturdays and holidays.

On January 20, 2012, State and DHS initiated a two-year Interview Waiver Pilot Program (IWPP) to streamline processing for low-risk visa applicants. The worldwide pilot program allows consular officers to waive in-person interviews for certain nonimmigrant visa applicants who are renewing a previous visa

within four years of its expiration. The pilot program also allows consular officers to waive interviews for qualified Brazilian applicants falling into specific age ranges, even when applying for visas for the first time. Many consular sections have implemented the IWPP during the past six months; as of August, 52 visa processing posts in 28 countries participate in the pilot program, waiving interviews for more than 63,000 low-risk visa applicants—without compromising security.

DHS is also focusing on a risk-based approach to security to create efficiencies for travelers, as exemplified through its Trusted Traveler Programs. Participants in these programs, such as Global Entry, who have been pre-vetted and determined as low-risk travelers to the United States, experience expedited customs, immigration, and agriculture processing that saves time and allows travelers to begin enjoying all that the United States has to offer. In turn, DHS has saved thousands of inspectional hours, allowing the Department to allocate more resources to other visitors. Similar Trusted Traveler Programs, including NEXUS at Canadian airports and on the northern border and SENTRI on the southwest border, have saved DHS a combined total of more than 173,000 manpower hours in 2011 and continue to grow in popularity. The joint U.S.-Canada Action Plan, supporting the 2011 Beyond the Border initiative, facilitates travel between both countries by increasing the volume of NEXUS enrollments, coordinating aviation security measures, and leveraging technology to improve air and land border crossings. DHS has also implemented “Ready Lanes” on the land borders for use by travelers with certain technology-enhanced identification cards. The use of Ready Lanes for participants of these programs has increased throughput by an average of 20 percent. DHS business transformation and enhanced training will build on these productivity and efficiency gains.

### *The Traveler Experience*

State and DHS recognize the public’s demand for a straightforward visa application process and port of entry inspections. Wait times—either for an interview with a consular officer (where an interview is required) or in the line to be inspected for entry into the United States—are a key factor in travelers’ impressions of the United States. State is making changes in its staffing model to reduce interview wait times. DHS is addressing wait times at ports of entry and at domestic security checkpoints at airports, while focusing on training its officers to provide a high level of professionalism.

At the time of this report’s submission, State is interviewing 85 percent of applicants worldwide within three weeks of their applications, compared with 57 percent in July 2011. In China, consular officers used Six Sigma management principles to train local staff and encourage critical thinking about the entire nonimmigrant visa application process. In Brazil, State expanded consular hours and used technology to decrease processing times. Long wait times are no longer the subject of discussion on Chinese and Brazilian internet chat rooms, and consular managers are shifting their focus from bringing down backlogs to finding even more ways to streamline operations and improve the applicant experience.

DHS is also continuing efforts to move travelers through screening processes as efficiently as possible, while maintaining security and delivering high-quality customer service. In FY 2011, 95 million U.S. and foreign passengers and crew were processed at our international airports—the highest total on record. Current statistics show that 75 percent of international aviation travelers wait less than 30 minutes for processing at U.S. ports of entry and 89 percent of travelers wait less than 45 minutes. These wait times represent a minor decrease from the FY 2011 wait times, despite an average increase

of 4 percent in the volume of international air travel. DHS's U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is mitigating the impact of the growth in increasing traveler volume on wait times by increasing membership in Trusted Traveler Programs. More than 1.4 million people, including over 300,000 new members this year, have access to Trusted Traveler Programs, allowing program members to receive significantly faster processing and freeing resources to move other travelers through the queue more quickly.

The quality of interaction with Federal officials influences the traveler's experience. CBP has made substantial investments in customer service training for its officers with positive results. A recent survey of travelers at airports in the Model Ports program—located at 20 airports representing 73 percent of international aviation travelers at ports of entry—indicates that 90 percent of travelers agree that CBP officers are welcoming, hospitable, and provide the right information at the right time.

DHS is also introducing efficiencies at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security checkpoints that are of value to foreign visitors traveling by air within the United States. Foreign visitors benefit from the efficiency of TSA checkpoints. In 2011, over 99% of federalized airports' checkpoint operational hours maintained wait times of less than 20 minutes. In addition, risk-based security initiatives that provide expedited screening to qualified travelers, such as children and the elderly, also benefit foreign visitors through the impact of more efficient checkpoint operations and through the enhanced security that a risk-based approach provides. In addition, risk-based security initiatives that provide expedited screening to qualified travelers, such as children and the elderly, also benefit foreign visitors through the impact of more efficient checkpoint operations and through the enhanced security that a risk-based approach provides.

### ***Building Partnerships***

Both State and DHS value partnerships with the private sector and are strengthening these relationships to improve government processes for travelers wishing to come to the United States. For example, State is incorporating private sector best practices into the visa process. Industrial engineers from Disney Worldwide Services, Inc. are donating their time and expertise to evaluate consular sections in Brazil and China, where they will suggest improvements for queue management and other ways to improve the applicant experience. State has forged partnerships with American Chambers of Commerce to provide expedited interview appointments for business travelers and to streamline appointment systems. DHS has worked extensively with travel sector stakeholders to improve the arrivals experience for foreign visitors, develop travel facilitation programs for low-risk travelers, and review screening procedures. The Model Ports initiative, which DHS piloted in Orlando with the help of local airport authorities and Universal Orlando Parks and Resorts, among others, is an example of such collaboration. Similar partnerships have been built with private sector companies, such as American Express and Delta Airlines, to increase enrollment in Trusted Traveler Programs.

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# Part I: Introduction

## Purpose

Executive Order (EO) 13597 on travel and tourism, issued January 19, 2012, establishes as U.S. policy that “a coordinated policy, consistent with protecting our national security, is needed to support a prosperous and secure travel and tourism industry in the United States.” It instructs U.S. government agencies to aggressively expand the nation’s ability to attract and welcome visitors while maintaining the highest standards of security.

The EO uses specific goals to focus the Departments of State (State) and Homeland Security (DHS) in developing and implementing a strategy of investments and innovations needed to attract foreign visitors to the United States. It supports a vision of hospitality and frictionless travel that avoids unnecessary inconveniences that might detract from visitors’ experience in the country. Such a strategy ultimately encourages the visitor to return.

This mid-year report accounts for the progress each Department has made towards meeting EO goals. These initiatives and results are organized into three key themes:

- 1) Increasing productivity and efficiency;
- 2) Renewing the focus on the traveler’s experience through the visa and foreign entry process; and
- 3) Building partnerships, both within the U.S. government and with the travel and tourism industry.

Each theme will explore the specific steps State and DHS have taken to meet the President’s goals. In preparing this report, both agencies expanded the scope of this paper to include related initiatives that support these goals to provide the full context of the Departments’ work in welcoming visitors.

## Background

The travel and tourism sector drives economic growth and is essential to the U.S. economy. In 2011, travel and tourism generated \$1.4 trillion in economic activity and supported 7.5 million jobs (exports generated from international visitors supported 1.2 million of those jobs).<sup>1</sup> This scale of activity makes tourism the United States’ top services export.

State and DHS are responsible for many of the services that travelers require to visit the United States. State processes visa applications, conducts visa interviews, and issues visas to qualified applicants. DHS implements customs, agriculture, and immigration laws and regulations at ports of entry; vets travelers on flights into, out of, or within the United States; and provides checkpoint security for domestically originating flights. Consequently, the two Departments are typically responsible for the first and

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Commerce and Department of Interior. *National Travel & Tourism Strategy*, 2012.

[http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS\\_final051512.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS_final051512.pdf)

Department of Commerce. International Trade Administration. Manufacturing and Services. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries. *Fast Facts—United States Tourism and Travel Industry 2011*.

[http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download\\_data\\_table/Fast\\_Facts.pdf](http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/Fast_Facts.pdf)

primary encounters a foreign traveler will have with the Federal government. From managing wait times to ensuring a high quality of interaction with Federal personnel, State and DHS do much to shape visitors' opinions about the United States.

Ensuring that the United States is a welcoming destination is essential for the health and prosperity of the tourism industry. The *National Travel & Tourism Strategy* cites an increasingly competitive global travel market.<sup>2</sup> Other countries are actively seeking to grow their market share, marketing their locales to attract travelers. Federal policies that support tourism can contribute to this industry's growth in terms of revenue, job creation, and job support.

### ***Initial Response to Executive Order 13597***

EO 13597 assigns the Departments of State and Homeland Security with lead roles in implementing the following directives:

- I. Increase nonimmigrant visa capacity in China and Brazil by 40 percent; (State)
- II. Ensure that 80 percent of nonimmigrant visa applicants worldwide are interviewed within three weeks of receipt of application; (State)
- III. Increase efforts to expand the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and travel by nationals of VWP participants; (DHS) and
- IV. Expand reciprocal recognition programs for expedited travel, such as the Global Entry program. (DHS)

State developed a four-pronged approach that increases capacity in China and Brazil while lowering worldwide wait times for nonimmigrant visa applicants:

- ***Increase Staffing at Highest-Volume Posts***, including: Increasing overall visa adjudicating positions in Brazil and China; and Hiring additional consular adjudicators with Portuguese and Chinese language ability via Limited Non-career Appointments.
- ***Expand Existing Facilities and Explore Possibilities for Additional Visa-Processing Facilities*** by: Opening two new consulates in Brazil; and Expanding, remodeling, and renovating existing facilities in Brazil and China.
- ***Increase Efficiency*** by: Expanding interviewing hours and multiple shifts in China, Brazil, and other high volume locations; and Implementing the Global Support Strategy that uses offsite support functions to free consular staff for adjudications.
- ***Implement the Pilot Program to Waive Interviews for Low-Risk Applicants*** by: Expanding the time within which a consular officer may renew, without interview, certain categories of visas for qualified applicants, from one to four years after expiration of the previous visa; and Streamlining processing for certain Brazilian applicants younger than 16 years and 66 years of age and older.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Commerce and Department of Interior. *National Travel & Tourism Strategy*, 2012. Page 3. [http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS\\_final051512.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS_final051512.pdf)

DHS similarly described initiatives to facilitate foreign visitor processing:

- ***Increase Efforts to Expand the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and Travel by Nationals of Visa Waiver Program Countries*** by: Actively supporting legislation in Congress that would enable expansion of the VWP; Reviewing Taiwan for VWP designation; Preparing for further expansion of the VWP; and Supporting interagency efforts to grow the volume of travel by nationals of VWP countries to the United States.
- ***Expand Reciprocal Recognition Programs for Expedited Travel*** by: Maintaining and deepening existing reciprocal recognition programs; Establishing pilots with new partner countries; Cultivating new reciprocal recognition programs through dialogue and sharing lessons learned; and Demonstrating the effectiveness of U.S. trusted traveler programs.

State and DHS jointly submitted a 60-day implementation report to the President on March 19, 2012. That report described the Departments' strategies to meet or exceed the goals in each of these four areas, outlining the actions both agencies would take to ensure a successful outcome at the end of 2012.

In preparing this 180-day report, State and DHS also included descriptions of additional initiatives they have undertaken beyond the Executive Order directives to support the President's goals for increased travel and tourism.

## Part II: Productivity and Efficiency Measures

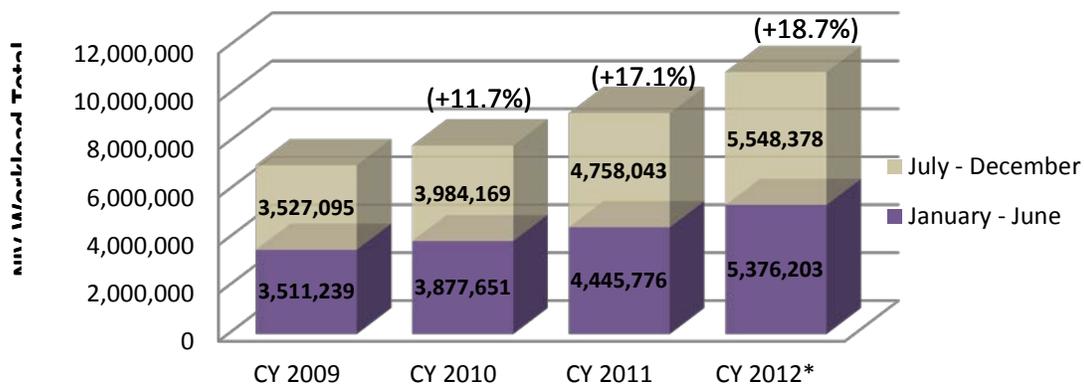
State and DHS are focused on increasing the government’s operational productivity and making the travel process as efficient as possible for visitors while also increasing capacity and production. State is meeting the challenge of EO 13597 through a combination of increased staffing, investment in infrastructure, innovative workload management, and streamlined visa processing. Similarly, DHS, in consultation with State, manages the VWP, which allows citizens from participating countries who otherwise would require a nonimmigrant visa for business or pleasure (category B-1/B-2) to visit the United States for up to 90 days without a visa. DHS also uses technology enhancements and process improvements to increase its capacity to process visitors and other entrants to the United States at its ports of entry. Both Departments have devoted considerable attention to increasing and enhancing travel with our two North American neighbors and greatest sources of visitors: Canada and Mexico. Increased productivity and efficiency are essential to growing the Departments’ capacity to provide the services required to accommodate the national goal of attracting 100 million international visitors annually by 2021.<sup>3</sup>



Department of State  
Visa Pressing Station

These efforts have paid off. International visitor arrivals increased 10 percent in the first three months of the calendar year (CY) 2012, compared to visitor arrivals over the same time period in 2011.<sup>4</sup> State estimates that demand for tourist visas will increase almost 19 percent in CY 2012 from 2011 levels.

**Figure 1: Worldwide Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) Workload Totals  
Calendar Years (CY) 2009-2012\*  
(\*Estimated: July through December)**



Source: Department of State

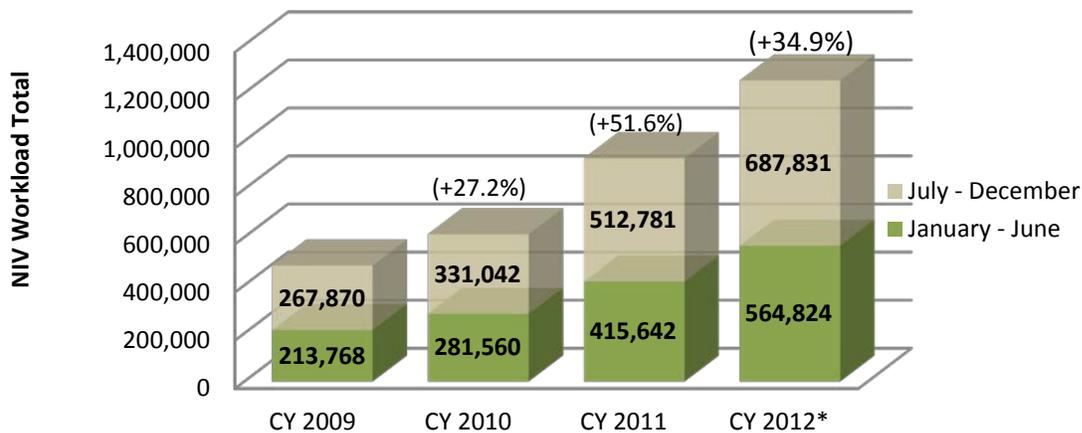
<sup>3</sup> Department of Commerce and Department of the Interior. *National Travel & Tourism Strategy*, 2012. Page 4. [http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS\\_final051512.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/NT-TS_final051512.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Commerce. Table C - Section 1: Total Visitation, Canada, Mexico, Total Overseas, Western Europe Non-Resident Visitation to the U.S. By World Region/Country of Residence, 2012. <http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/view/m-2012-i-001/table1.html>

## Rising Demand

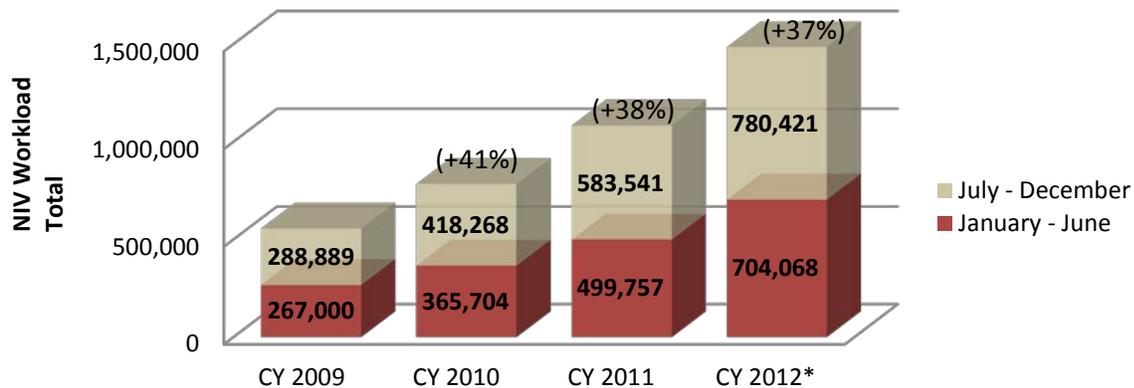
While worldwide demand for tourist and short-term business visas (B-1/B-2 visas) jumped 24 percent in the first six months of the calendar year (compared to the first six months in 2011), demand for these visas in Brazil and China surged by 38 percent and 48 percent, respectively. This trend does not appear to be short-lived. Bolstered by strong economic growth, China is expected to generate a 198 percent increase from current levels in international visitation by 2016. Visitation from Brazil is predicted to increase by 70 percent from 2011 levels.<sup>5</sup> Figures 2 and 3 below demonstrate the dramatic increase in visa demand in Brazil and China since CY 2009:

**Figure 2: Brazil Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) Workload Totals  
Calendar Years (CY) 2009-2012\*  
(\*Estimated: July through December)**



Source: U.S. Department of State

**Figure 3: China Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) Workload Totals  
Calendar Years (CY) 2009-2012\*  
(\*Estimated: July through December)**



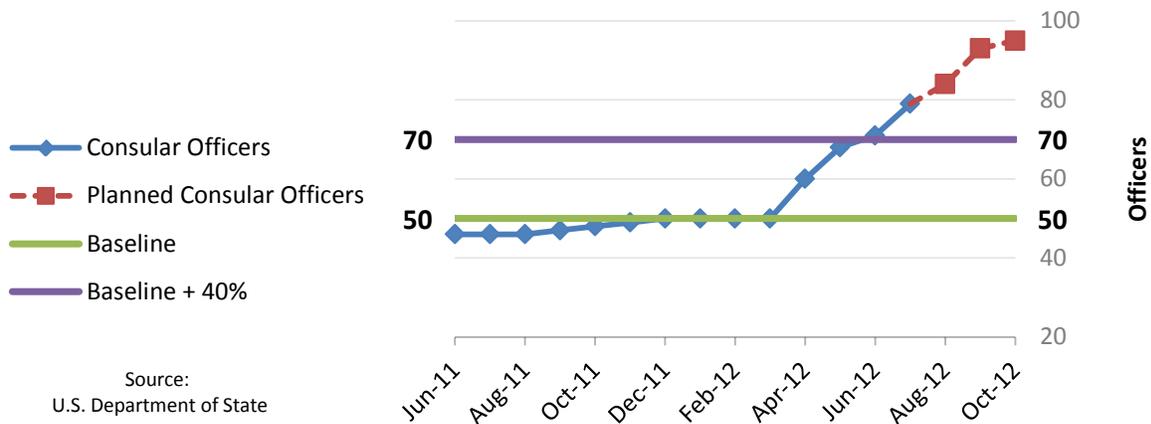
Source: U.S. Department of State

<sup>5</sup> Department of Commerce. *Forecast of International Travelers to the United States by Top Origin Countries 2011-2016*. <http://tinnet.ita.doc.gov/view/f-2000-99-001/forecast/Forecast-COUNTRIES.pdf>

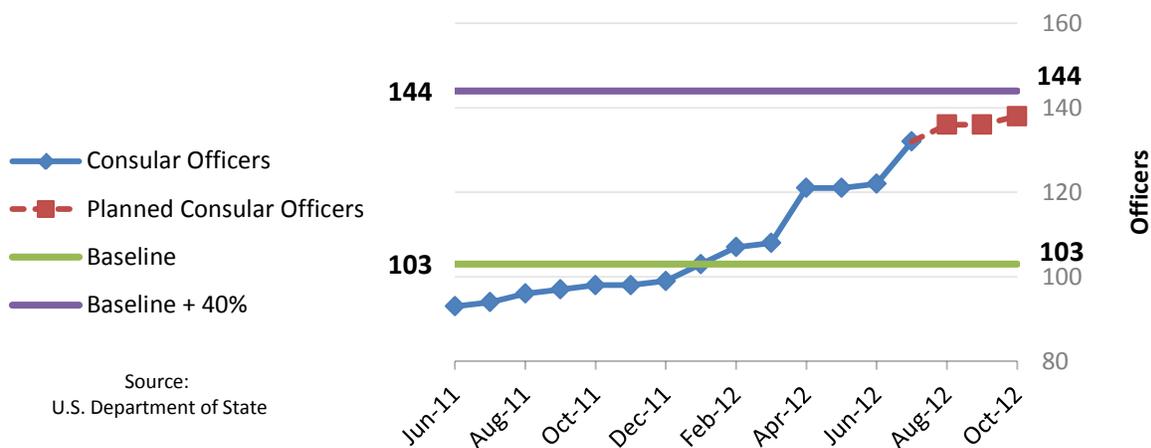
## Adding Staff

By the end of 2012, State will have created over 50 new visa adjudicator positions in China and 60 in Brazil, including 43 hired under State’s innovative Limited Non-career Appointment (LNA) program. Between October 2011 and July 2012, State deployed, on temporary duty, 220 consular officers to Brazil (a 253 percent increase over the number of temporary officers sent the previous fiscal year) and 48 officers to China (a 60 percent increase). The permanent staff increases alone will enable State to meet the 40 percent capacity increase target goal outlined in EO 13597 in Brazil by June 2012 and in China by December 2012, as shown in Figures 4 and 5 below:

**Figure 4: Mission Brazil**  
**Increase in NIV Visa Processing Capacity**  
**June 2011 - October 2012**



**Figure 5: Mission China**  
**Increase in NIV Visa Processing Capacity**  
**June 2011 - October 2012**



## Investment in Infrastructure

State is investing millions of dollars to improve the infrastructure of its consular sections in China and Brazil, and will use the bulk of this investment to add interview windows in consular sections and create space for additional staff. At high-volume visa processing locations in China and Brazil, each new interview window can increase a consular section's capacity by 30,000 visa applicants per year.

These investments will increase Mission Brazil's visa processing capacity to 2.2 million per year by CY 2014, a 140 percent increase over 2011 levels. State will expand and enhance consular facilities in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo, and open new consulates in Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte. Construction at the existing posts will begin in July 2012, with completion by spring 2013. These projects will add 10 new interview windows; make space for new staff; enlarge entrances, security screening areas, and waiting rooms; and provide more efficient floor plans that physically move applicants through the interview process as seamlessly as possible. State expects to open the new consulates in Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre in late 2013 or early 2014, with the joint capability to adjudicate up to 400,000 nonimmigrant visa applications annually.



*From Left: Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs in Mission China Chuck Bennett and Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Janice L. Jacobs participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony to reopen the former consular section in Beijing, China.*

Source: U.S. Department of State

Infrastructure improvements will increase Mission China's visa capacity by 2.2 million applications by the end of 2013, a 120 percent increase from 2011 levels. In CY 2012, State will add a total of 48 additional interview windows in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chengdu. In May, Embassy Beijing reopened its former consular section with 13 additional windows. A new building in Guangzhou and expanded facilities in Shanghai, Chengdu, and Shenyang will increase interview capacity at these consulates by over 50 percent in 2013. On June 8, U.S. Ambassador to China Gary Locke announced that the United States would offer full visa and American Citizen Services at the consulate general in Wuhan once a facility is completed in 2014. State also expects Wuhan will increase capacity by 200,000 visa applications annually.

## Increased Efficiency

In Mission Brazil, managers implemented two interview shifts and expanded hours, including occasional Saturdays and holidays. Consular staff in Brazil improved applicant traffic flows that increased throughput and reduced the time applicants spend in consular waiting areas. Officers in Brazil also piloted the use of software that greatly reduces the typing required for documenting interview notes,



*Applicants gather to apply for visas during a "Super Saturday" in Sao Paulo, Brazil.*

Source: U.S. Department of State

reducing the overall interview time and thus enabling consular staff to process more applicants in a shorter timeframe. Improved collaboration across the four posts in Brazil also ensured a more consistent applicant experience and facilitated the spread of innovative practices.

In Mission China, consular officers used Six Sigma management principles to train local staff and encourage critical thinking about the entire nonimmigrant visa application process. In Shenyang, this training resulted in staff targeting paper in the workflow as a drag on efficiency, and compelled them to devise a system of printing and affixing visa application and delivery service barcodes to each nonimmigrant visa applicant's passport to eliminate the consular section's dependence on paper-based tracking sheets. Officers also shrunk mandatory paper handouts to a passport-sized piece of paper containing links to online informational material. These innovations allowed staff to handle a 70 percent increase in workload. In Shanghai, consular managers and visa adjudicators are examining ISO 9000 standards to streamline workflow, and similar standards are being set in Guangzhou, where State will centralize processing for visa renewal applications when an interview is not required.

### ***Streamlining the Visa Application Process***

On January 20, 2012, State and DHS initiated the two-year interview waiver pilot program (IWPP) to streamline processing for low-risk travelers. As part of this pilot, State implemented new policies, in coordination with DHS, which allow consular officers working in U.S. embassies and consulates to waive interviews for certain categories of qualified nonimmigrant visa applicants, including those renewing their visas within four years of the expiration of their previously held visa, subject to limitations. The pilot program also allows consular officers to waive interviews for qualified Brazilian nationals younger than 16 or older than 66 years of age, provided that there are no other security concerns. Consular officers continue to exercise their authority to interview any visa applicant when deemed necessary.

The IWPP builds upon the layers of security added over the last decade into the visa screening process. The visa application process incorporates multiple biographic and biometric security checks, all supported by a sophisticated global information technology network. These checks are completed for every visa application, whether the applicant appears for a personal interview or not. This system allows State and DHS to apply a risk management-based approach to the visa interview requirement—facilitating travel while maintaining security.

Consular sections at 52 visa processing posts in 28 countries, as of August, participate in the IWPP. In its first five months, the IWPP resulted in the waiver of more than 63,000 visa interviews, saving those applicants the time normally needed to schedule and participate in the visa interview process—in addition to potential travel to and from a U.S. Embassy/Consulate. The measure also allowed consular officers, who spend an average of two to four minutes per interview, to efficiently utilize approximately 4,000 hours of interviewing time on first-time and higher-risk travelers. State expects additional consular sections to participate in the IWPP once they can make necessary changes to their appointment systems.

The IWPP is very popular in China and Brazil, where over 80 percent of IWPP cases are processed. State's Mission (the Embassy and constituent consulates) in Brazil processed almost 33,000 IWPP cases between March 2012 and June 2012, while Mission China processed over 20,000 IWPP cases between February 2012 and June 2012. The IWPP is gaining popularity in other key markets, including India. Mission India processed almost 4,000 IWPP applications since it launched its program in April 2012.

IWPP participation and popularity is expected to increase as additional markets, including Mexico and Germany, begin IWPP participation in July 2012.

## ***Anticipating Visa Demand***

State is taking steps to anticipate surges in visa demand from countries exhibiting strong economic growth. In Argentina, for example, a growing economy and ever more attractive cost savings associated with consumer purchases in the United States fueled a 97 percent increase in nonimmigrant visa demand between FY 2006 and FY 2011. Consular managers have reallocated current embassy staff to aid consular operations, added temporary duty staff, and recently added two new consular adjudicator positions. The Global Support Strategy (GSS), which streamlines visa application support activities, plays a major role in meeting Argentine visa demand.<sup>6</sup> As a result of all of these efforts, the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires reduced the visa interview wait time from an all time high of more than 140 days to the current three days.

The extension of visa validity for Colombians traveling on nonimmigrant B-category (tourism and short-term business) visas from five to ten years is a major step towards managing long-term growth. Colombians qualified for a B-category visa to the United States will only have to renew their visa once every ten years, encouraging increased travel between Colombia and the United States. In 2011, almost 500,000 Colombians visited the United States.

According to the Department of Commerce, visitors from India spent a record-breaking \$4.4 billion in the United States in 2011, an increase of more than 10 percent from 2010. Visitation from Indian nationals is expected to increase by more than 30 percent over the next five years.<sup>7</sup> Annual U.S. travel and tourism exports to India have risen by double-digits in seven of the last eight years. The State Department is in front of this demand—visa applicants in India typically wait less than a week for an interview appointment and spend less than an hour in the consular section, and 97 percent of visas are processed within 24 hours.

## ***Visa Waiver Program***

DHS manages the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows visa-free travel to the United States for eligible nationals of 36 countries visiting the United States for 90 days or less for business or tourism. DHS is pursuing several courses of action to assist with expansion of the program. One such avenue is DHS's active support, in concert with other Federal agencies, for the passage of pending legislation in Congress that seeks to achieve broader discretion in expanding the program to new countries. These bills in the House and Senate would amend VWP statutory provisions to give DHS broader authority to expand the VWP while strengthening the program's already strong security standards. DHS, in consultation with other Federal agencies, has provided the Congressional authors with suggestions that would allow for a targeted, measured expansion of the program to well-qualified partners. DHS and its Federal partners will continue to engage with Congress to support the advancement of this legislation.

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<sup>6</sup> See Part III: The Traveler Experience for more information on the processing improvements under the Global Support Strategy.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5.

Following the Secretary of State's nomination of Taiwan in December 2011, DHS is now formally reviewing Taiwan's eligibility for VWP designation, as required by law.<sup>8</sup> A technical team from DHS visited Taiwan in March 2012 to conduct an intensive on-site assessment of Taiwan's law enforcement, security, and immigration systems. The results of that assessment are being consolidated with additional information from DHS and other U.S. government agencies to produce the final report. In conjunction with DHS's review, the Director of National Intelligence will produce an independent intelligence community assessment of Taiwan's potential designation into the VWP. On the basis of those two reports, the Secretary of Homeland Security will make a determination on Taiwan's candidacy.

DHS is actively working with partner countries to ensure compliance with all existing requirements and is preparing for further expansion of the VWP. DHS is also consulting with potential entrants to negotiate information-sharing agreements, as well as bring their law enforcement, security, and immigration capabilities up to VWP standards. This effort is another way that DHS continues to conduct preparatory work to pave the way for future expansion.

Alongside efforts to expand the VWP, agencies across the Federal government are working to expand travel by nationals of existing VWP countries. DHS supported efforts led by the Departments of Commerce and the Interior to craft a National Travel & Tourism Strategy, released in May 2012, to promote domestic and international travel opportunities throughout the United States.

By streamlining and automating processes and procedures, the VWP makes tourism to the United States more attractive to nationals of VWP countries. In 2010, in conjunction with the deployment of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), DHS' U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) automated the Form I-94W used by VWP travelers, who comprise over 60 percent of travelers arriving by air in the United States. This change eliminated the need for VWP travelers, who have the required advance travel authorization via ESTA, to fill out and present to CBP the Form I-94W upon arrival in the United States. This change has resulted in 58 percent faster processing times for VWP travelers and decreased wait times at ports of entry.

DHS will continue to consult with travel and tourism stakeholders, consistent with U.S. law and policy, on ways to encourage travel to the United States.

### ***Trusted Traveler Programs***

DHS continues to facilitate the arrival process into the United States through Trusted Traveler Programs and other technology- and management-based improvements. CBP has partnered with airline carriers, airports, and other travel industry stakeholders to increase participation in programs that provide expedited and more efficient processing to frequent, low-risk travelers. Programs such as Global Entry for arrival by air into the United States, NEXUS for travel between Canada and United States, and Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) for



*DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano and CBP Acting Commissioner David Aguilar opening the U.S.-South Korea Reciprocal Trusted Traveler Program with Korean Minister of Justice Kwon Jae-Jin. June 2012.*

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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<sup>8</sup> See Section 217(c)(2)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. § 1187(c)(2)(C).

crossing the southwest border, have provided these benefits to over 1.4 million members for travel through land, air, and sea ports.

Trusted Traveler Programs employ a thorough vetting of travelers who have voluntarily applied for membership, paid a fee, and provided personal data (including biographic information, photos, and fingerprints) to CBP, which then performs rigorous background checks and performs an in-person interview of the applicant with a CBP officer. These programs provide expedited immigration, customs, and agriculture processing upon arrival in the United States for pre-approved, low-risk participants through dedicated lanes and automated kiosks.

Productivity and efficiencies realized from these programs include the following:

- The Global Entry program allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk air travelers upon arrival in the United States. Members may enter the U.S. by using automated kiosks, which are currently located at 37 sites (including pre-clearance locations). In addition to U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, Mexican nationals can now enroll in Global Entry, and Global Entry's benefits are also available to Dutch citizens enrolled in the Privium program; South Korean citizens enrolled in the Smart Entry Service program; Canadian citizens and residents through the NEXUS program; and citizens of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Qatar through limited pilot programs. In addition, DHS has signed joint statements to develop trusted traveler arrangements with Australia, Israel, New Zealand, and Panama to allow their qualifying citizens to participate in Global Entry. DHS continues to expand the program both domestically and internationally as part of the Administration's efforts to foster travel and tourism, supporting EO 13597.

Global Entry allows vetted air passengers to clear CBP inspectional processing 70 percent faster than general passenger processing. Almost 44 percent of Global Entry passengers are admitted into the United States in less than one minute, and approximately 77 percent are admitted in less than five minutes.

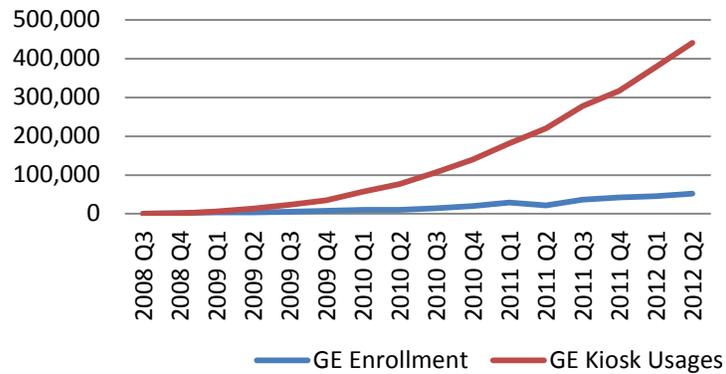
EO 13597 directs DHS to expand reciprocal trusted traveler arrangements like Global Entry. On June 12, 2012, CBP launched a reciprocal program with South Korea. CBP has signed joint statements to develop trusted traveler arrangements with Australia, Israel, New Zealand, and Panama to allow qualifying citizens to participate in Global Entry. In addition to these new and potential cooperative partnerships, CBP operates limited pilot programs with Germany, Qatar, and the UK to provide expedited

**Global Entry Kiosks**



Figure 6 depicts Global Entry enrollment and kiosk use from FY 2008 - FY 2012. Since June 8, 2008, Global Entry kiosks have been used more than 2.6 million times. CBP has processed over 1,262,000 Global Entry passengers to-date in 2012, an increase of over 500,000 travelers compared to the same time in 2011. Kiosk usage has saved CBP Officers more than 50,000 inspectional hours and has removed low-risk travelers from the general queue, thus reducing wait times for non-members. Global Entry kiosk usage has increased significantly as more members join the program and as kiosks become available at additional airports.

**Figure 6: Global Entry Enrollment and Kiosk Usage  
FY 2008 - Q2 FY 2012**



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

- For travelers at the U.S. land border ports of entry from Mexico, the SENTRI program provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers through a Dedicated Commuter Lane. SENTRI is open to citizens of any country. In FY 2012, SENTRI membership increased by 8.8 percent, with CBP processing SENTRI travelers nearly 13 million times at southern border crossings to-date in 2012. SENTRI members wait approximately 30 minutes less and are processed 63 percent faster than travelers going through general lanes on the southern border.
- NEXUS provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers at pre-clearance airports, land border, and seaport crossings between the United States and Canada. NEXUS membership is open to U.S. and Canadian citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents. NEXUS membership increased by 16.4 percent in FY 2012, with CBP processing NEXUS travelers 3.5 million times at northern, land, sea, and air ports of entry this year to date. NEXUS members wait approximately 5 minutes less and are processed 58 percent faster than travelers going through general lanes on the northern border.
- Global Entry benefits are also extended to members of the SENTRI and NEXUS programs. As of July 2012, over 578,000 trusted travelers receive Global Entry benefits through NEXUS membership, while over 142,000 receive them through SENTRI membership.

## **Encouraging Travel at the Border**

### **Beyond the Border Initiative**

On February 4, 2011, President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a Declaration on a Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness establishing a new long-term partnership that will accelerate the legitimate flows of goods and people between both

countries. On December 7, 2011, Prime Minister Harper and President Obama announced the supporting Action Plan on Perimeter Security and Economic Competiveness. The Action Plan was designed to speed up legitimate trade and travel, improve security in North America, and align regulatory approaches between the two countries.

Under the Action Plan, eight Canadian preclearance airports (Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg) will upgrade their checked baggage security to Transportation Security Administration (TSA)-certified Explosives Detection System equipment as the primary checked baggage screening equipment. The upgrades will facilitate travel for passengers from these airports who are connecting to other flights in the United States. The necessary upgrades are scheduled to be completed at all Canadian preclearance airports by March 31, 2015. In order for travelers to enjoy the benefits of this initiative as soon as possible, TSA and Canada will stop rescreening checked baggage on an airport-by-airport basis as new equipment is deployed and implemented. With the two countries mutually recognizing each other's air cargo security programs, the efficiency of screening is improved and the burden on the industry is reduced.

In May 2012, CBP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) announced joint efforts to expand and enhance NEXUS, including conducting enrollment blitzes, implementing an expedited renewal process, and creating a plan to expand NEXUS lanes and booths at key ports of entry. Initial steps include focusing on the timely processing of NEXUS applicants in Ottawa, deploying a new trusted traveler kiosk at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, and opening a NEXUS lane at the Queenston/Lewiston Bridge. In May and June 2012, CBSA and CBP enrolled more than 1,000 new members into the NEXUS program. Also, CBSA announced it will extend NEXUS membership eligibility to citizens of Canada currently residing abroad, or who have recently returned to Canada—aligning with amendments that the United States made in 2009.

CBP and CBSA also announced the installation of new and advanced sensor technology at the Peace Bridge and Queenston-Lewiston Bridge that will help measure and report delays, and relay this information to travelers. As a result, people will be able to plan their routes better, time their crossing, and select the bridge with the shortest wait-times.

### ***21st Century Border Initiative***

On May 19, 2010, Presidents Obama and Calderon signed the Declaration Concerning 21st Century Border Management, pursuing initiatives and programs designed to expedite legitimate trade and travel, while ensuring security. The Declaration is aimed at increasing economic competitiveness, enhancing public safety, welcoming lawful visitors, facilitating trade, reducing the cost of doing business in North America, ensuring wise stewardship of shared resources, and promoting economic development in the border region.

The bi-national Presidential Executive Steering Committee (ESC) for the Management of the 21st Century Border develops an annual Action Plan to focus attention on priority issues and also monitors the implementation of individual projects.

Accomplishments achieved under the ESC's 2011 Action Plan included expanding the use of Trusted Traveler Programs by launching Global Entry; working to expand the world's busiest land border crossing at San Ysidro-Tijuana; modernizing the Tornillo-Guadalupe Bridge to enhance capacity; increasing the number of northbound commercial inspection lanes at the Nuevo Laredo - Laredo World Trade Bridge, the single most important truck crossing on the U.S.-Mexico border; breaking ground on the

Matamoros-Brownsville West Rail Bypass project that will increase rail crossing efficiency by routing trains outside of the downtown area; and completing border wait time studies at Otay Mesa, California - Mesa de Otay, Baja California, and Pharr, Texas - Reynosa, Tamaulipas.

Under the 2012 Action Plan, efforts will continue to focus on expanding border crossing infrastructure at high priority locations such as the Mariposa port of entry in Nogales; supporting and institutionalizing the Regional Master Planning processes to jointly plan new border crossings; establishing pilot pre-inspection and pre-screening programs for cargo in the U.S. and Mexico; building complementary trusted traveler and trusted shipper programs; collaborating to combat transnational criminal organizations; and planning and executing joint patrols to prevent violence in the border region.

### ***Streamlining the Visa Process in Mexico***

Travel from Mexico accounts for more revenue to the U.S. economy than travel from any other country other than Canada (whose citizens are largely visa exempt). In 2011, Mexican visitors spent over \$9.2 billion dollars in the United States, and 8.5 million Mexican citizens have valid U.S. tourist and/or business visas. Consular officers at State's ten visa-issuing posts in Mexico issued 837,596 visas and border crossing cards from January through June 2012, an increase of almost 32 percent from the same time period in the previous year.



*U.S. Consulate General Tijuana Building at new location in Mesa de Otay*  
Source: U.S. Department of State

State is improving the visa applicant experience for Mexicans through a variety of efficiency measures. For example, consular sections there introduced a nationwide appointment system that allows applicants to find and utilize the next available appointment among all of the 10 consular sections in Mexico, and introduced fee payment by credit card online or over the phone—giving applicants more convenience and more options. State also opened a new consulate general building in Ciudad Juarez in 2008, another in Tijuana in 2011, and will open a third in Monterrey in 2014. All of these facilities dramatically expanded the size and efficiency of consular operations. In Monterrey, the number of visa interview windows will increase from 27 to 41.

## Leveraging the Land Border Integration Initiative



*Land Border Crossing, Ambassador Bridge,  
Detroit, Michigan*

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CBP is focused on securing the U.S. northern border with Canada and the southern border with Mexico, while expediting the flow of lawful travel, trade, and immigration. Cross-border communities contain significant populations that commute across the border every day and whose water or electrical power comes from the other country. Recognizing the cross-border nature of infrastructure and commerce is critical to CBP's ability to effectively manage each border.

CBP has greatly increased its use of technology in the land border environment; this technology is now integral to CBP operations, providing clear security and facilitation benefits. Scanning and screening

technologies significantly augment CBP's ability to expedite the legitimate flow of persons and cargo across land borders by helping to identify and segment traffic into higher and lower levels of risk. By employing these technologies, CBP can more quickly assess the risks associated with persons and goods seeking entry, enabling more efficient and risk-informed processing.

DHS's Land Border Integration (LBI) initiative—an expansion of the efforts begun under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)—uses technology to achieve productivity and efficiency gains through expedited land port facilitation. Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, improved License Plate Readers, and the Vehicle Primary Client remain key to facilitating travel by providing traveler information to CBP officers and automatic queries of law enforcement databases as the traveler's vehicle approaches the primary inspection. The Vehicle Primary Client is a next generation computer upgrade that allows CBP officers to verify the validity of travel documents quickly and make determinations regarding the admissibility of travelers.

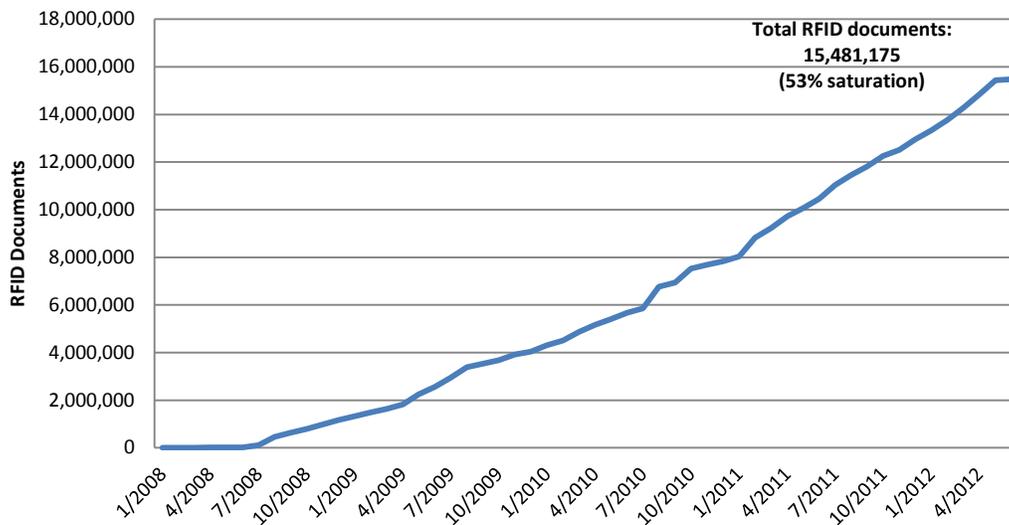
WHTI began these efforts to increase the security of the United States by requiring travelers to present one of a limited number of designated securely issued travel documents denoting identity and citizenship and that can be verified electronically in real-time. WHTI has reduced the number of acceptable travel documents from over 8,000 to a core set of six secure document types (including new RFID-enabled documents). In addition to U.S. passports, the following RFID-enabled documents are accepted at the border:

- U.S. Passport Card
- Trusted Traveler Program cards (Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST)
- Enhanced Driver's Licenses from issuing states and Canadian provinces (currently issued by Michigan, New York, Vermont, and Washington and British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec)
- New Border Crossing Card
- New Permanent Resident Card (green card)
- Enhanced Tribal Card (for U.S. federally recognized tribes and currently issued by the Pascua Yaqui of Arizona and the Kootenai of Idaho)

Governments and tribes have issued more than 16 million RFID-enabled travel documents that support facilitated travel. The use of RFID technology and the promotion of new RFID document options allows for the transition of travelers from less efficient to more efficient processing methods. Traveler law enforcement name queries using RFID travel documents are 20 percent faster than queries conducted with a machine-readable document without RFID and 60 percent faster than a manual entry with a paper document, such as a birth certificate.

Figure 7 represents the increasing number of RFID-enabled documents queried at the southern border from January 2008-May 2012, primarily the result of a large increase in Border Crossing Card renewals from consular sections in Mexico. Currently, there is a 53 percent saturation of RFID documents, meaning that 53 percent of all law enforcement queries are initiated by RFID-enabled travel documents. This statistic is significant because RFID document queries result in more efficient, faster processing.

**Figure 7: RFID Documents at the Border  
2008 - Present**



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CBP has instituted Ready Lanes—lanes reserved exclusively for travelers with RFID documents—at 16 locations along the southern border and four locations along the northern border. Approximately 200,000 vehicles and 350,000 travelers use Ready Lanes each week. Compared to general lanes, Ready Lanes are 15 percent more efficient along the southwest border and 37 percent more efficient along the northern border.

To capitalize on Ready Lanes’ success, CBP is developing the capability to re-designate lanes in real time to maximize throughput. Active Lane Management is the principle of monitoring incoming traffic and making adjustments to lane designations as needed to facilitate traveler flows and maintain security. It allows CBP to switch a lane’s designation among general lanes, Trusted Traveler/Dedicated Commuter Lanes, and Ready Lanes based on current traffic patterns. This flexibility allows CBP to be more efficient in processing travelers at the land border.



## ***Preclearance***

CBP currently is able to provide streamlined border processing for inbound passengers departing from the 14 international aviation pre-clearance locations in Aruba, The Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, and Ireland. The traveler inspection at a preclearance location is essentially the same inspection a traveler would experience at a U.S. port of entry, but is completed on foreign soil. TSA evaluates the host country's aviation security standards at each of these locations to confirm that preclearance airports are performing checkpoint screening of passengers and accessible property using procedures that provide a level of security equivalent to the security that TSA screening provides in the United States. CBP stations officers at all preclearance locations to ensure the highest levels of security are being met.

All precleared flights arriving from the 14 preclearance airports are permitted to deplane passengers directly into the sterile area of the connecting domestic U.S. airports without being rescreened at a TSA checkpoint. The passengers' connecting checked baggage, however, must still be screened by TSA upon arrival in the United States, unless the location has been approved for checked baggage preclearance. Preclearance airports are responsible for nearly a sixth of all incoming international aviation travelers.

## ***Business Transformation***

In addition to integrating technology, CBP is seeking innovative ways to improve security, wait times, and traveler satisfaction. Some of these new initiatives include enhancing port operations through technology, assessing how to best staff ports of entry, and developing ways to automate the forms travelers use for entry.

Areas under consideration include employing mobile technology to better access ports with infrastructure constraints and instituting programs that better assess the overall risk of the traveler.

After successfully automating the Form I-94W, CBP is working to automate the Form I-94, a paper form currently used by non-VWP visitors seeking admission into the United States at sea and air ports of entry. The automation of the Form I-94 will improve data accuracy and timeliness, and save data entry costs for CBP. It will have a positive impact at air and sea ports of entry, helping to mitigate the need for additional staff and allowing travelers to experience reduced wait times.

Additionally, CBP is researching and developing ideas that will leverage the time passengers spend prior to arrival at the primary customs processing booth for conducting significant aspects of primary processing. These improvements would be integral to enhancing CBP operations and processing in land, air, and maritime environments. CBP will continue to strive for more effective measures operationally, as well as develop effective strategies that will improve CBP ports of entry facilities, airline cooperation, flight scheduling, and passenger wait times.

## Part III: The Traveler Experience

Wait time is a key factor in the traveler experience. Both the length of time an applicant must wait for an interview with a consular officer (where an interview is required) or in the queue to be inspected for entry into the United States affect travelers' impression of our country. This section describes how State is succeeding in reducing interview wait times, ensuring at least 80 percent of applicants worldwide are interviewed within three weeks of submitting an application, and how DHS addresses wait times at ports of entry and at security checkpoints at domestic airports, as well as other aspects of customer service related to travel.



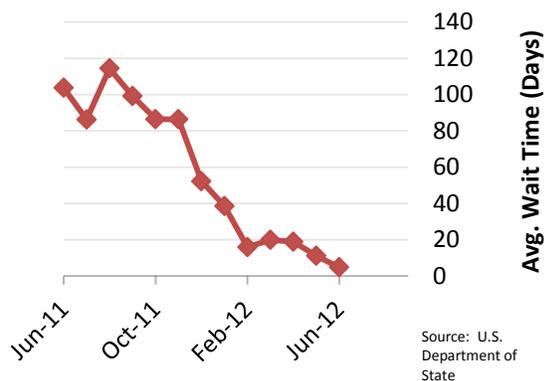
*U.S. Ambassador to China Gary Locke congratulates the one millionth nonimmigrant visa applicant in 2011*

Source: U.S. Department of State

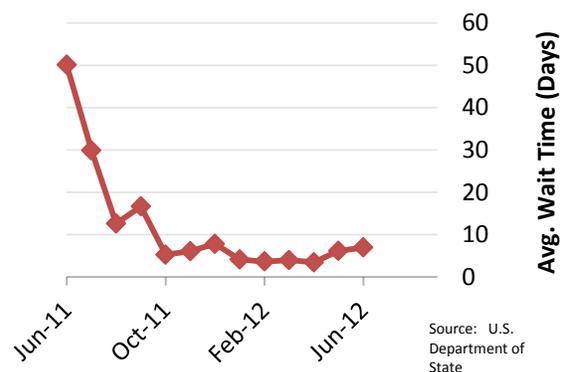
### Visa Interview Wait Time

At the time of this report's submission, State is interviewing 85 percent of applicants worldwide within three weeks of their applications, compared with 57 percent in July 2011. State has drastically reduced appointment backlogs in Brazil, resulting in a 98 percent decrease in interview wait times from a high of 120 days in August 2011 to just two days in July 2012. In China, wait times have remained below three weeks since October 2011, and today remain under a week at some consular sections in Mission China. Long wait times are no longer the subject of discussion on Chinese and Brazilian internet chat rooms, and consular managers are shifting their focus from bringing down backlogs to finding even more ways to improve operations.

**Figure 8: Mission Brazil  
Monthly Average NIV Wait Time  
(B-1/B-2)  
June 2011 - June 2012**



**Figure 9: Mission China  
Monthly Average NIV Wait Time  
(B-1/B-2)  
June 2011 - June 2012**



State will maintain its wait-time goal by deploying staff to high demand markets, including Brazil, China, India, and Mexico, to meet the seasonal increase in visa demand; shifting positions from low-demand to

high-demand markets; and hiring additional adjudicators as necessary. The continual addition of temporary and permanent staff has brought wait times in 2012 far below 2011 levels.

### ***The Global Support Strategy***

The Global Support Strategy (GSS) is a worldwide contract that changes the way a visa applicant experiences the visa process; streamlining the way he or she receives information, provides fingerprints, sets appointments, pays for visa fees, arranges for document delivery, and is welcomed into the consular section for his or her interview. The goals of GSS are better accountability, transparency, and customer service in the support activities supplied by commercial entities to consular sections around the globe.

GSS replaces the current patchwork of contractor-provided visa support services at overseas posts (e.g., call centers, appointment scheduling, and document delivery) with a single contract and comprehensive process for logistical arrangements preceding the actual adjudication process. Now covering nearly 59 percent of the visa processing posts worldwide, GSS has allowed consular managers to increase per-officer adjudications without adding staff, has improved transparency, and has established uniform service standards and goals.

In January 2011, State opened 11 Applicant Service Centers (ASC) under GSS for visa applicants throughout Mexico. Three additional ASCs opened in Mexicali, Piedras Negras and Reynosa in June 2012. These centers allow applicants who are renewing visas to complete much of their non-adjudication processing in a single visit averaging 20 minutes or less, giving applicants unprecedented flexibility and convenience in the application process. In many cases, the introduction of ASCs in Mission Mexico lowered the total cost of a U.S. visa to applicants in Mexico by eliminating third-party fees previously charged for appointment, information, and delivery services.

Mission Brazil implemented GSS in April 2012. GSS provides off-site biometric collection in Brazil as well, freeing up windows for interviews. State expects to introduce GSS in China, without offsite fingerprint centers, by spring 2013.

### ***Explaining the Visa Process***

State is working harder than ever to explain the visa application process, improving applicants' access to simple, straightforward information before, during, and after they apply for a visa. Instructions on how to apply for a visa are available on every visa-processing embassy and consulate's website, and the nonimmigrant visa application form (DS-160) is available in 23 languages, including Chinese, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

State is close to completing a major "renovation" of its general information website to improve the content and accessibility.<sup>9</sup> The new version of the travel.state.gov (TSG) website will include user-friendly tools such as the "Visa Wizard," which through a series of questions will guide the user to information most appropriate to his or her needs. The new TSG contains broader, more user-friendly information than State's current website, covering more than 35 different nonimmigrant visa categories and the Visa Waiver Program for VWP-eligible travelers. This new site will also offer easy access to information on interview wait times and fees. Applicants can even compare wait times at different

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<sup>9</sup> <http://travel.state.gov>

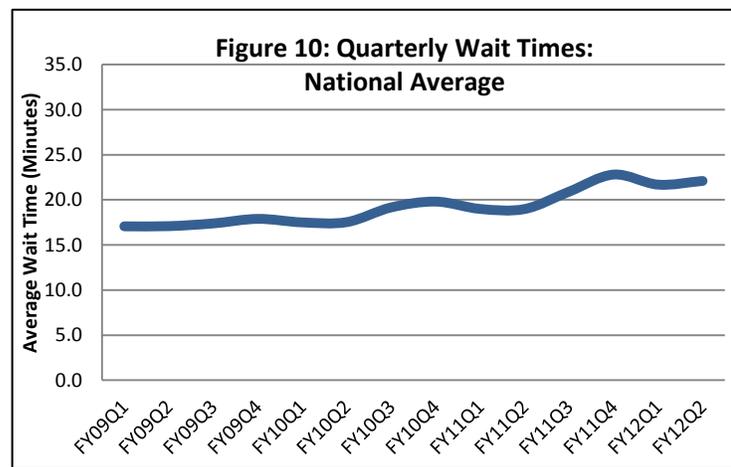
consulates within a country, giving them more options and more flexibility in scheduling their interview appointments.

Consular officers are reaching out to visa applicants through social media, traditional media, and in-person meetings to explain the visa application process in potential travelers' own languages—whether for tourists, business travelers, or students. Several consular sections have produced their own videos that debunk commonly held myths, engage audiences, and prepare applicants. State recently released a video entitled “Visit America: It’s Easier than you Think” that offers welcoming images of the United States coupled with straightforward information about the visa process.<sup>10</sup>

### Wait Times at Ports of Entry

CBP provides both aggregate and port of entry-specific wait time information on its website.<sup>11</sup> CBP has provided the public with an easily accessible tool, the CBP Airport Wait Times web site, that allows travelers to know what to expect when they are traveling.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, CBP is working with airports and other stakeholders to better document the entire processing time of passengers, including time entering the facility, time spent waiting for baggage and other elements of the passenger experience.

Figure 10 depicts the average wait time at airports from Q1 FY 2009 to present. Air wait times have increased in part because of increases in international travel. Beginning in 2010 and continuing through this year to date, international air travel has recovered dramatically after a decline from 2008-2009, averaging almost 4 percent growth per year. FY 2011 saw 95 million U.S. and foreign passengers and crew processed at international airports—the highest total on record. With the increase in the use of larger capacity aircraft, the number of passengers arriving on a “per flight” basis has increased significantly, causing a concentration of demand for inspection services and a resulting increase in wait times. Additionally, during FY 2011 and FY 2012, 47 new or expanded port facilities, including brand new international air terminals in Miami and Atlanta, and a doubling in the number of vehicle primary booths at San Ysidro, California, have opened or are slated to come on line.



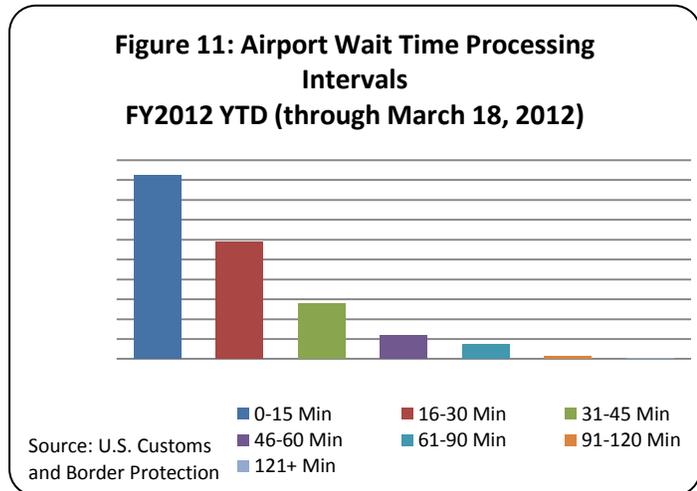
Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

<sup>10</sup> [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa\\_5735.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_5735.html)

<sup>11</sup> [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/wait\\_times](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/wait_times)

Figure 11 depicts Airport Wait Time Processing Intervals in FY 2012, showing the percentage of passengers that wait between certain ranges of time. Current statistics show that 89 percent of travelers wait less than 45 minutes before being processed and 75 percent of travelers wait less than 30 minutes for CBP processing. The national wait time average in FY 2011 was 22.8 minutes and was approximately 21.7 minutes for the first quarter of FY 2012.



CBP also uses data to optimize staffing at Ports of Entry to minimize wait times. CBP port directors identify peak processing periods well in advance based on historical data and real time operational information provided by carriers and airport authorities. CBP identifies the hours when passenger volume and wait times are highest, times which differ from airport to airport. For example, peak hours generally occur at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) between 9AM-6PM, but non-peak hours occur between 12AM-7AM. However, peak hours at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) differ, occurring between 5AM-7AM and 1PM-8PM. With this advanced information, directors begin making operational adjustments before peaks occur to maximize capacity during these periods. These operational adjustments include expanding pre-primary roving operations, utilizing cargo lanes for passenger processing where possible, and adjusting individual schedules and lane assignments.

Through innovation, modernization and business transformation efforts, CBP will be able to better allocate resources, as well as streamline the admission process for most travelers. CBP is developing the Airport Wait Time Console Real Time Flightboard, which uses live data feeds from multiple sources to create a view of passenger arrival data. The wait time for each arriving passenger is recorded, and aggregates of these wait times may be obtained based on the individual flight, class of admission, time of day, or any other data element associated with an arriving air passenger. CBP uses this data to report wait times on its public website. CBP is currently testing this program at a few key airports such as New York John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), and will expand the program to additional airports later this year.

### ***Innovative Programs for Reducing Wait Times at Ports of Entry***

Recognizing that one size does not fit all, CBP has launched several programs to facilitate travel by adapting the inspections process to meet travelers' circumstances. In cooperation with airport operators and airlines, CBP has developed programs that greatly reduce missed connections, increase passenger throughput, and enhance the arrival processing experience.

The "One-Stop" program is a CBP-managed initiative to facilitate the processing of arriving international travelers who do not have checked luggage. It is currently available at Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and JFK, where CBP respectively processes 1,014 and 200 people per day through the program. CBP provides a dedicated lane for travelers identified as eligible for One-Stop.

CBP officers conduct all CBP inspection processes (Passport Control, Baggage Control, Agriculture, and, as necessary, Carry-on Luggage) at the passport control primary booth.

The Express Connection program facilitates the entry process for international travelers with closely scheduled connecting flights. CBP dedicates a designated processing booth and participating airlines dedicate representatives in the Federal inspection area to identify and escort pre-selected travelers to the designated Express Connection primary booth(s). This program is currently available at the following airports, each one part of the Model Ports program: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago (O'Hare), Dallas, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Los Angeles, Miami, New York (JFK), Newark, and Orlando. Model Ports utilizing the Express Connection program are currently processing between 100 and 200 program travelers per day.

### *Wait Times for Domestic Air Travel*

After entering the United States, many international visitors take advantage of the nation's extensive air transportation network for domestic travel. TSA ensures their security while traveling by air within the United States and is most visibly present through its over 50,000 trained and certified Transportation Security Officers who screen close to two million travelers daily at over 450 airports across the country. TSA has taken concrete steps to implement key components of its intelligence-driven, risk-based approach to security, advancing TSA toward its goal of providing the most effective security in the most efficient way possible. Foreign travelers benefit from these innovations largely through the impact of more efficient checkpoint operations and through the enhanced security a risk-based approach provides.

In 2011, over 99% of federalized airports' checkpoint operational hours maintained wait times of less than 20 minutes in 2011. As part of its wait time management, TSA is developing Automated Wait Time (AWT) technology to monitor and track queuing traffic at security checkpoints, enabling TSA to reallocate screening personnel and resources to areas of higher congestion and priority as needed. The AWT system also includes the ability to display wait times to the traveling public on monitors at airport checkpoints to help travelers with their planning. TSA has tested an AWT system in its laboratories and anticipates field testing in airports in the coming months.

One of the cornerstones of TSA's risk-based security initiatives is TSA Pre✓™, an expedited screening program at certain U.S. airports. TSA Pre✓™ affords eligible U.S. citizens traveling domestically with an opportunity to receive expedited screening, such as permitting some U.S. passengers to keep their shoes and light outerwear on and to leave laptop computers and a 1 quart bag containing liquids, gels, and aerosols in their carry-on bags. TSA will continue to incorporate random and unpredictable security measures throughout the security process. As of July 26, 2012, over 2 million U.S. passengers received TSA Pre✓™ expedited screening at 18 participating domestic airports in partnership with Alaska, American, Delta, and United Airlines and US Airways. TSA Pre✓™ helps facilitate travel for all passengers, including foreign visitors, as the resources saved from screening TSA Pre✓™ passengers are allocated to process others.

TSA expects to bring TSA Pre✓™ to a total of 35 domestic airports in partnership with 5 airlines, encompassing 51 checkpoints, by the end of CY 2012.

The CBP Trusted Traveler Programs, especially Global Entry, have been instrumental to the success of TSA Pre✓™. To date, over 670,000 U.S. Citizens are able to access TSA Pre✓™ through their membership in Global Entry.

TSA also has introduced risk-based security screening to enhance the screening experience for children and the elderly. In the fall of 2011, TSA enacted risk-based checkpoint screening procedures for passengers 12 and under that include:

- Allowing children 12 and under to leave their shoes on.
- Allowing multiple passes through the walk through metal detector and advanced imaging technology to clear any alarms on children.
- Using explosives trace detection technology on a wider basis to resolve alarms on children.

Since the spring of 2012, passengers 75 and older are now able to leave their shoes and a light jacket or outerwear on when passing through security. TSA anticipates these changes will further reduce—though not eliminate—the need for a physical pat-down for these passengers.

**Figure 12: TSA Risk-Based Security Initiatives**



Source: Transportation Security Administration

## Customer Service

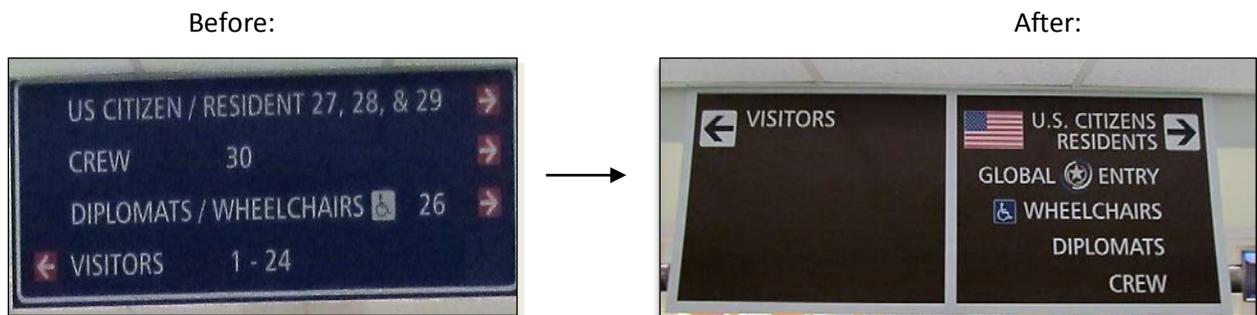
### Model Ports Initiative

DHS and its travel industry partners have worked together to improve processes for clearing and welcoming travelers into the country while maintaining the highest levels of professionalism. CBP has taken a proactive management approach in addressing passenger processing issues and continues to

work in partnership with airport authorities, airlines, and the travel industry to identify new ways to more efficiently move people through the entry process. Best practices have been identified through the Model Ports program and shared with other locations around the nation.

Located at 20 airports representing 73 percent of incoming travelers, the Model Ports program offers several benefits to improve the traveler experience. Through modifications to airport facilities, Model Ports offer more streamlined, understandable, and welcoming CBP areas. Many model ports have foreign language welcome ambassadors and special service representatives to aid in directing travelers to open CBP primary booths and ensure CBP forms are completed prior to arrival in the processing area. CBP has redesigned and distributed over 1,400 new signs to display at Model Ports. From the best practices implemented at these ports, travelers experience an enhanced look and feel so that they feel welcomed when they enter the United States.

**Figure 13: Simplified Signage at Model Ports**



Additionally, Model Ports have improved customer service through the establishment of the Passenger Service Manager (PSM) position, a key advocate for promoting traveler satisfaction. There are about 46 full-time PSMs stationed at the 20 Model Ports. Photographs and contact information for all PSMs is prominently displayed for maximum traveler visibility and access. The PSM is a uniformed CBP manager able to respond to traveler complaints or concerns; oversee issues related to travelers requiring special processing; observe overall traveler processing; address issues on site as they occur; and provide recommendations for improvement of traveler processing and professionalism. The PSM also provides training to managers, supervisors, and officers on customer service and professionalism issues; collects and analyzes reports concerning professionalism and traveler satisfaction; and promotes public awareness of the CBP mission through distribution of public information bulletins, brochures, and comment cards.

**Figure 14: Improved Queuing at Model Ports**



### ***Professionalism and Enhanced CBP Officer Training***

As one of the first faces travelers see when they arrive in the United States, CBP officers play an integral role in providing an optimal traveler experience. CBP has worked to improve its CBP officer training to ensure that travelers are shown the highest level of professionalism. In 2008, CBP began working on a comprehensive basic training program for new officers. This new training program was launched in February 2011; there are currently 495 officers enrolled. The new curriculum includes three mandatory components: a 15-day pre-academy, an 89-day basic academy and a post-academy training program that ends as the trainee completes his or her probationary period.

The goal of these programs is to produce a professional law enforcement officer who possesses the skills necessary to effectively carry out CBP's critical mission. The programs prepare trainees mentally, physically, and ethically to meet the challenges and demands of a law enforcement position and equips them with the specific skills needed to perform their duties with a high level of competence.

### ***Public Outreach***

In the fall of 2011, TSA launched TSA Cares, a helpline specifically designed to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint. TSA Cares serves as an additional, dedicated resource specifically for passengers with disabilities, medical conditions or other circumstances, or their loved ones, who want to prepare for the screening process prior to flying.

To provide passengers with 24/7 access to the most commonly requested TSA information on their mobile device, TSA has developed the My TSA mobile application. My TSA puts the most frequently requested information about security procedures at airport checkpoints right at a traveler's fingertips. The application has multiple functions, including allowing travelers to find out if an item can be taken in checked or carry-on bags, view delays at all U.S. airports via a feed from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), receive commonly asked packing and traveling tips, and see other passengers' wait times at checkpoints at specific airports. The application is available for free on iTunes and the mobile web version can be found on smartphones with a web browser.

### ***Effective Redress Mechanism***

The DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) is part of a coordinated Federal government effort to provide a secure, easy-to-use single point of contact for travelers to resolve travel-related screening issues. DHS TRIP is recommended as a resource where individuals believe they have been unfairly or incorrectly delayed, denied boarding or improperly identified for additional screening at U.S. transportation hubs or have experienced delays at customs and immigration ports of entry. DHS launched DHS TRIP in 2007 as part of a joint DHS-State initiative.

As of July 11, 2012, DHS TRIP has adjudicated and closed more than 120,000 requests for redress in the five years since the program's inception. DHS TRIP improves the traveler's experience by assisting the U.S. government with updates and corrections to inaccuracies in their records, reviewing the possible causes of additional screening, and providing a Redress Control Number that travelers can use to mitigate against misidentifications during commercial aviation security screening. Travelers who have been through the DHS TRIP process are encouraged to enter that number when booking a flight.

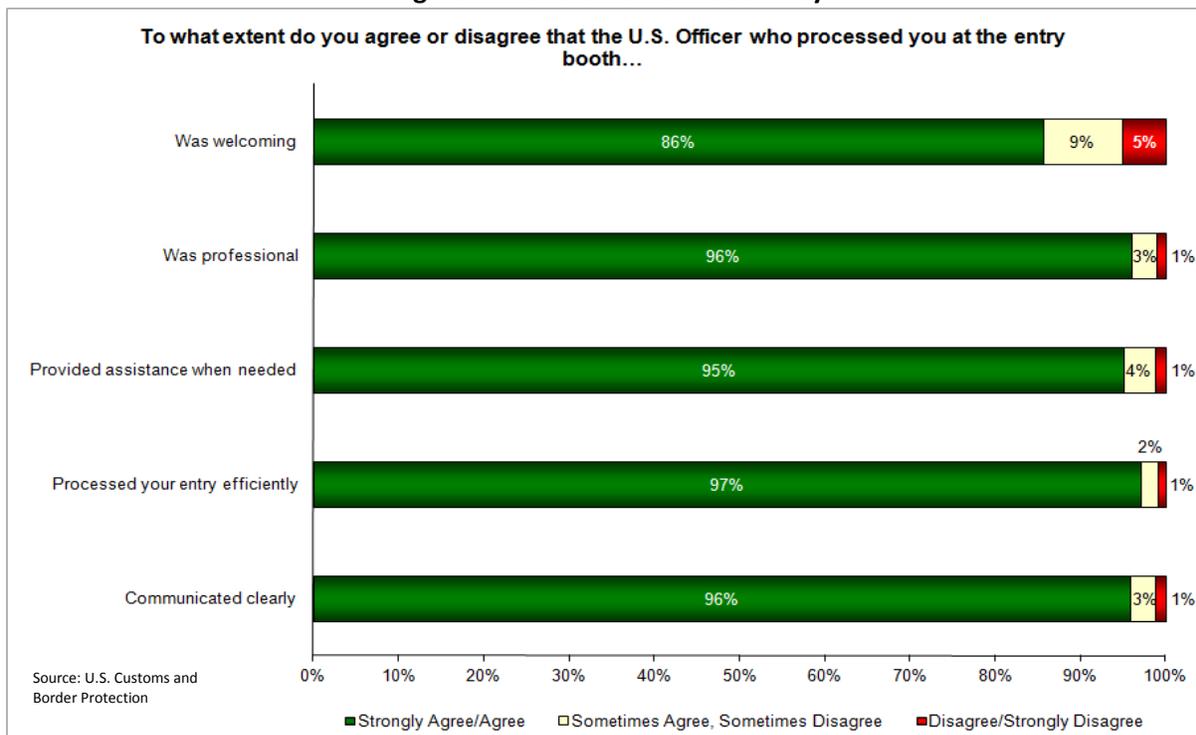
DHS TRIP is a web-based program that can be found through the TSA or DHS website.<sup>13</sup> DHS TRIP is available to all travelers regardless of country of citizenship or residence.

### **Traveler Satisfaction Survey Results**

As a result of CBP’s commitment to improve customer service, CBP and the DHS Private Sector Office developed and deployed a traveler satisfaction survey to benchmark passenger satisfaction and CBP professionalism at the 20 Model Ports of Entry. The survey was conducted by Medforce Government Solutions (MGS) to evaluate CBP’s performance in achieving Model Port goals. Customer survey research shows that travelers are very satisfied with their reception at Model Ports.

The traveler satisfaction survey for all 20 Model Ports began October 12, 2011, and was completed on November 18, 2011.

**Figure 15: Customer Service Survey**



The survey findings indicate that:

- Nearly 90 percent of travelers agree that CBP officers are welcoming;
- Over 90 percent of travelers agree that CBP is providing the right information to travelers, at the right time and in a hospitable manner;
- Over 80 percent of travelers agree that CBP is creating a calm, pleasant Customs waiting area; and
- Nearly 90 percent of travelers feel that the entry processing time is either short or reasonable.

Travelers have expressed a very high satisfaction with the way CBP is managing its entry process and providing timely and friendly customer service. CBP is still analyzing the results of this survey and will make additional results public. CBP is working directly with industry partners to develop and maintain an ongoing survey process to maintain a feedback loop with travelers so that improvements continue.

Aligned with the customer service survey initiative, CBP revitalized the comment card program. Comment cards are available in the CBP Areas and can be filled out by travelers wishing to express their views of CBP processing. Each card is collected and the results are shared with the ports of entry, and if necessary referred for additional investigation. CBP has improved the format of the card, making the cards more accessible to the traveling public, providing more analysis and feedback for the ports of entry, and taking corrective action where necessary.

## Part IV: Building Partnerships

As State and DHS confront the challenges of upholding border security and facilitating legitimate travel in an increasingly mobile world, both agencies have reached out to travel and tourism industry stakeholders for input or assistance. These public-private partnerships encourage innovation and collaboration, and advance the U.S. government and the industry's mutual goals to attract international visitors to the United States. State and DHS have increasingly benefited from the support and expertise of the private sector to enhance regional and field-level operations and services.

### *Department of State*

State is incorporating private sector best practices into the visa process. Industrial engineers from Disney Worldwide Services, Inc. are donating their time and expertise to evaluate consular sections in Brazil and China, where they will suggest improvements for queue management and other ways to improve the applicant experience. These engineers will offer this expertise in a cross-sector effort to streamline U.S. visa operations in the most efficient and welcoming way possible.

State has greatly benefited from ongoing partnerships between consular sections and business organizations overseas, most prominently the American Chambers of Commerce (AmCham). These organizations are in unique positions to offer assistance to small and medium size businesses in navigating the visa application process to do business in the United States. State has instructed consular officers to work with local business groups, including AmCham, to expedite urgent business travel requests. Some consular sections in Brazil, China, and Mexico offer designated interview time slots for verified members of these groups or their affiliates. These programs, which exist in over 100 countries, play a critical role in streamlining the appointment system so that managers can work to lower wait times across the board. Consular officers sincerely value the work these organizations do to encourage legitimate business travel to the United States.

Mission China's Group Travel Leisure Program, implemented first at the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai, has had a substantial impact on the President's export initiative to promote and assist U.S. business abroad in order to spur exports, trade, and investment that create new jobs in the United States. The program connects with global travel agencies with the Foreign Commercial Service and the consular sections to ensure that U.S.-bound travel and leisure groups are afforded timely visa interview appointments. This effort was recognized in State's selection of Mission China to receive the Economic and Business Affairs Assistant Secretary's Export Promotion Achievement Award for 2011. The award was based on Mission China's collaboration and partnership with the Foreign Commercial Service and pointed to their creation of the Group Leisure visa facilitation program, which led to more than \$72 million in U.S. exports in 2011.

### *Department of Homeland Security*

CBP also works with airlines and other stakeholders to improve the inspection process in air ports of entry. For example, CBP developed Express Connection and One Stop in coordination with the air travel industry to facilitate travel. Strong partnerships with the travel industry also allow CBP to leverage different customer bases to identify frequent travelers and potential Global Entry members. CBP has

partnered with airlines to promote the Global Entry program using advertisements, press releases, and media events. These efforts have resulted in significant increases in enrollment in the program. Additionally, CBP has conducted community outreach events designed to raise awareness of the program. Recognizing the benefits of the program, American Express and United Airlines now reimburse top-tier customers for Global Entry application fees. As of June 30, 2012, American Express has reimbursed nearly 90,000 Global Entry application fees. CBP is currently working with several other partners to expand this program to more users later this year.

TSA also leverages ongoing partnerships and communication with the aviation community - including airlines, airports, and industry and passenger trade associations - regarding risk-based security initiatives. TSA has also been engaging with non-traditional stakeholders in transportation security such as hotel chains, rental car companies, travel agents, visitors and convention centers, large companies and associations with traveling populations. TSA cooperates with the travel industry to conduct outreach at trade shows, association events, and annual meetings to educate passengers on risk-based security.

TSA works closely with its foreign partners around the world to promote secure travel. In 2011, it conducted aviation security training in 43 partner countries and signed 14 agreements on technical assistance and information sharing. TSA provided training assistance to more than 100 foreign governments with Last Points of Departure flights to the United States.

The Model Ports Initiative involves close public-private sector collaboration. To take one example of a successful Model Port, a partnership with industry partners and stakeholders resulted in significant improvements to the facilities at the Orlando International Airport. A working group that included DHS agencies, the Port of Orlando, and many private sector participants, such as Universal, Disney, Gatorland, and Seaworld, resulted in improved queuing, streamlined signage, a more welcoming interior decor, and foreign-language-speaking passenger facilitation. Partnership was critical in leading the private sector participation in that effort, and thousands of dollars worth of improvements were contributed. This local effort is considered a model for ports across the country; CBP is looking to highlight similar efforts in the future.

CBP has also worked with the Walt Disney Company to develop an informational video in the passport primary queuing area titled, "Welcome to the United States 'Simple as 1, 2, 3'," which presents travelers with step-by-step instructions on what to expect during CBP processing. The video is subtitled in eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish, and is seen by over 25 million visitors to the United States each year.<sup>14</sup> CBP also partnered with Disney to create a scenic video that shows travelers across the United States in everyday life.

In addition to specific programs and initiatives, DHS entities have also worked with the travel and tourism industry to try to improve the traveling experience at a more comprehensive level. The Orlando and Las Vegas ports of entry collaborated with their airport authorities, local theme parks, hospitality, visitors' bureaus, and other stakeholders to discuss local operations and implement initiatives to improve visitor processing and port facilities. Orlando businesses that were involved in this effort are now sharing their experiences with other tourism industry leaders to encourage more local-level initiatives at other airports. Similar meetings are held regularly at numerous airports across the country whereby process improvements, facility needs and innovative ideas, such as process streamlining, can

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<sup>14</sup> [http://nemo.cbp.gov/opa/videos/2009/us\\_123.wmv](http://nemo.cbp.gov/opa/videos/2009/us_123.wmv)

be discussed with all stakeholders in the arrivals process. CBP and TSA continue to welcome the efforts and willingness of industry to engage at the local level to address challenges and opportunities unique to the arrival experience at each airport.

DHS entities also leverage partnerships to improve the overall traveler experience for specific passenger groups. TSA continues to partner and communicate with a coalition of over 50 national organizations representing the interests of passengers with disabilities and those from diverse religious, ethnic, racial, and other backgrounds. TSA holds quarterly teleconferences with members of the Disability and Multicultural Coalition and also holds an annual conference every September at TSA headquarters. TSA personnel also present at the national conferences of groups that are members of the coalition and interact with individual members on a regular basis. Coalition members include the American Diabetes Association, the United Ostomy Associations of America, the Sikh Coalition, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council. Recent outreach activities include a presentation on TSA's risk-based security efforts to the Sikh Community Leaders Briefing organized by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Expertise is also shared at the regional and local level. In March, a nationwide car rental company provided a briefing to CBP and TSA representatives to share best practices on queue management and customer service. In April, the Airports Council International convened a call with DHS and many of its member airports to discuss volunteer traveler aides and "ambassador" programs used to improve the welcoming experience. These kinds of efforts and communication help DHS learn best practices from industry leaders, provide industry and the travel and tourism community with an opportunity to better understand Federal operations, and facilitate stronger working relationships in daily port of entry and airport operations.

Beyond the sharing of expertise, partnerships with the private sector and other external entities have proved invaluable in the promotion of Federal programs and services. Companies and industry associations have the marketing capabilities to make appeals to many audiences. For example, DHS has developed a process to work with convention organizers to offer onsite Global Entry enrollment interviews for thousands of conference or convention participants. DHS partnered with the U.S. Travel Association and convention and visitors bureaus to enroll more people into Global Entry at their industry events. Through outreach at trade shows and association events, TSA and CBP educate industry and the traveling public on current initiatives and services, but have also been able to encourage participation in the Global Entry program. By continuing to add organizations to support and notify their members, TSA and CBP are able to grow membership in the Trusted Traveler Programs of DHS as well as provide a higher quality of screening experience.

The Federal government will continue to welcome collaboration with private sector entities, nongovernmental organizations, and the traveling public to enhance and grow services and programs that facilitate secure travel and tourism.

## Part V: Conclusion

State and DHS have exceeded or are on track to achieve EO 13597 goals by the end of CY 2012. As of submission of this report, approximately 85 percent of applicants worldwide are interviewed within three weeks of applying for a visa, and State's capacity to process applications in Brazil and China has already met or will meet the 40 percent increase target before the end of the calendar year. DHS has launched a reciprocal Trusted Traveler Program with South Korea's Smart Entry Service program; signed trusted traveler joint statements with Australia, Israel, New Zealand, and Panama; and is working with Congress to authorize broader discretion in expanding VWP to new countries, while working with specific VWP candidates —such as Taiwan—to review eligibility for VWP designation, as required by law.

Each Department will continue to build capacity, expand programs, modernize and reorganize processes, and when appropriate and possible, hire more people. These efforts will not only assure a fully successful outcome at the end of 2012, but allow both Departments to fully support National Travel & Tourism Strategy goals to attract 100 million travelers by 2021.

The accomplishments to date, and the accomplishments to come, are the result of the dedication, commitment and hard work of thousands of Federal employees at home and overseas. Both State and DHS look forward to continuing to facilitate the travel of millions more international visitors this year, while upholding the highest level of border security.