



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0906

January 14, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G St. NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

The Committee on Homeland Security remains committed to ensuring that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) effectively fulfills its critical mission of safeguarding the nation's transportation systems while maintaining operational efficiency and fiscal responsibility. As TSA continues to adopt biometric identification technologies and leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance screening procedures, it is imperative that Congress evaluate the cost-effectiveness, operational impact, and privacy implications of these advanced tools. To that end, we respectfully request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a comprehensive review of TSA's implementation of biometric and AI technologies, assessing their potential to improve security outcomes, streamline operations, and reduce costs without compromising civil liberties.

Over the past decade, TSA has explored the integration of a range of biometric identification technologies, such as fingerprint recognition, iris scanning, and facial biometrics, into its screening procedures.¹ These technologies are designed to verify the identities of passengers with greater accuracy and speed, enhancing both security and the passenger experience.² Beyond these well-known methods, TSA has the potential to carefully explore additional biometric systems capable of analyzing unique biological and behavioral characteristics.³ Emerging tools could enable TSA to verify identities in ways that reduce reliance on physical documents, streamline checkpoint processes, and increase security measures at scale.

Furthermore, by leveraging AI-driven technologies, TSA can enhance its ability to detect threats, optimize staffing levels, and lower the likelihood of human error. For example, AI-based algorithms can analyze real-time data to identify suspicious behaviors, detect anomalies in passenger belongings, and refine risk-based screening protocols. However, as TSA invests heavily in these technologies, it is crucial to ensure that they deliver a meaningful return on

¹ Transportation Security Administration, *TSA Biometrics Strategy*, (July 2018), https://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/tsa_biometrics_roadmap.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ Gov't Accountability Office (GAO-24-106293), *Biometric Identification Technologies: Considerations to Address Information Gaps and Other Stakeholder Concerns*, (April 2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106293.pdf>.

investment while safeguarding traveler privacy and adhering to federal data protection regulations.

Building on GAO's April 2024 report titled "*Biometric Identification Technologies: Considerations to Address Information Gaps and Other Stakeholder Concerns*," this requested review should further assess TSA's current and planned biometric initiatives with a focus on their financial impact, operational outcomes, and potential privacy risks.⁴ Specifically, we request that GAO address the following areas of concern:

1. What are the overall cost savings, if any, from TSA's implementation of biometric identification and AI systems, and how do these savings compare to the associated costs of deployment, maintenance, and personnel adjustments?
2. How have biometric and AI technologies impacted TSA's operational efficiency, including improvements in passenger processing times, staffing requirements, and checkpoint throughput, and to what extent have these systems demonstrably enhanced security outcomes, such as reducing false alarms, improving threat detection, and mitigating vulnerabilities?
3. What specific privacy and data protection policies does TSA have in place to safeguard the biometric information it collects, and are these policies sufficient to address potential risks of data breaches or misuse while ensuring compliance with federal privacy regulations?
4. How does TSA's use of biometrics and AI compare to similar efforts by other federal agencies, such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and international transportation security organizations, and are there best practices or lessons learned from these agencies that could strengthen TSA's approach?
5. What are the projected long-term costs and benefits of expanding biometric and AI technologies across all TSA checkpoints, and does TSA have a plan in place to monitor and evaluate the return on investment over time to ensure sustained cost-effectiveness and operational improvements?

We look forward to GAO's insights on these important questions, which will help inform our legislative and oversight responsibilities.

Should you require any additional information or clarification, please contact Homeland Security Committee Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your prompt reply.

⁴ *Id* at 3.

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
January 14, 2025
Page 3

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark E. Green". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" and "G".

MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carlos A. Gimenez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "C" and "G".

CARLOS A. GIMENEZ
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Member of Congress

The Honorable Shri Thanedar, Member of Congress