

REPUBLIC AIRPORT OPERATORS APPROVED FOR TSA SCREENING

Move allows private jet charter clients non-stop service to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Washington D.C.

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In the aftermath of the attacks on Sept. 11, access to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Washington D.C. (DCA) was closed to general aviation or private aircraft, effectively ending access to the nation's capitol for passengers departing from [Republic Airport](#) in East Farmingdale.

But, according to [Republic Airport](#) Director Mike Geiger, things changed in September of last year when the airport became designated as a gateway facility to DCA, once again allowing access for Republic's private jet charter passengers to the heart of Washington D.C.

As a gateway airport, Republic now has a permanent [Transportation & Security Administration](#) (TSA) presence where passengers are generally screened at either of two locations: [Talon Air's](#) charter private jet facility or [Sheltair's](#) fixed-base passenger terminal.

Sheltair provides services such as aircraft maintenance, fueling and hangar space to all of the airport's tenants while Talon is a private jet charter service that operates out of a 100,000-sq-ft hangar and office complex with its own fleet of aircraft including a Sikorsky 76B Helicopter and Gulfstream IVSP.

"Having the TSA at Republic helps all of the airport's charter services to be more competitive," said Jason Sanders, senior vice president of marketing for Talon Air.

Sanders said that the move is meaningful because it is a time-saver that allows passengers to fly directly into Ronald Reagan airport without having to make an additional stop at another airport for TSA screening. "Before we became an approved TSA facility, Washington D.C.-bound passengers might have had to stop at White Plains, Islip or even Teterboro for screening," he said.

Since its TSA approval, Talon has flown about 50 flights into Ronald Reagan Airport.

Under the DCA Access Standard Security Program (DASSP), approved operators can fly into and out of DCA. The program requires thorough screening of passengers, baggage and crew in addition to the presence of a TSA trained and certified armed law enforcement officer on-board each private jet flight.

Sanders added that other benefits of the TSA presence include limiting noise and local air traffic for the surrounding community as well as minimizing passenger delays that are typically seen in the larger, commercial airports. "By the time you check-in at LaGuardia or Kennedy airport, you could be in Washington D.C. departing from Farmingdale," Sanders said, noting that Talon's clients are a good mix of local business people and residents from across Long Island.

But, while Talon's facility is primarily geared to serve its roster of private jet charter clients, Republic's eight or so other charter services can utilize TSA screening out of Sheltair's passenger terminal, as long as they adhere to all requirements set forth under the DASSP.

"As a fixed-base operator, we're licensed by the airport and we're open around the clock to handle all types of aircraft services from fueling and ground-handling to flight training," said William McShane, Sheltair's senior vice president of aviation development and properties.

He said that any of the airport's charter services can use Sheltair's facility to clear passengers through TSA. So far, only about six charter flights have been cleared through their facility to Washington D.C.

But, Andrew Schmertz, president of charter operator Hopscotch Air, believes that Ronald Reagan Airport should once again be opened completely for general aviation aircraft as it was before September 11. "I understand public concerns but there is really no evidence that general aviation aircraft pose a significant threat," Schmertz said. "I think that the TSA's security program is an overreach."

Nevertheless, Schmertz says that while they have only done a handful of flights to Washington, he is glad that Republic was designated as a gateway airport. "To this point, we haven't really marketed flights to D.C., but maybe if we did we might have more business."

Do you think it's important for Republic to have TSA screening? [Tell us in the comments.](#)