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VIPA Officials Confirm No Federal Cuts Behind Airport Congestion in the USVI

Addressing concerns about delays, VIPA officials confirmed that federally funded projects for the territory's airports remain on track. They attribute recent congestion to increased passenger volume rather than staffing or screening issues.

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Aerial shot of the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

During Tuesday's meeting of the V.I. Port Authority Governing Board, agency officials assured board members that current congestion at the airports is not the result of reductions or cuts at the federal level.

Board member Celestino White asked the question while members were receiving financial and operational updates from Assistant Executive Director Bill Rawlins.

Territorial airport manager Jerome Sheridan stepped in to note that at a recent Federal Aviation Administration conference, he met with a senior official with responsibility for the agency's southern region. "They've given no indication that anything is going to be held up or anything," Mr. Sheridan said, regarding the several federally-funded projects currently obligated for the territory's two airports.

Even for future projects, Mr. Sheridan says, "we are to still continue moving as [if] nothing has happened."

Neither have there been any indications of staffing reductions among airport workers employed with the federal government, Mr. Sheridan told VIPA board members.

Rather than issues of staffing or screening, lengthy lines at the airports, particularly the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix, are due to an increase in travelers transiting through the facility. "It's not necessarily anything tied to the federal government," Mr. Sheridan reassured Mr. White.

"There's an issue when there are three aircraft on the ground trying to load at the same time, and that line becomes long," added board chair Willard John.

VIPA has been encouraging travelers to arrive at the airport [well in advance of their scheduled flight times](#), to mitigate against the lengthy queues.