

# Press Release

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## **DHS PROPOSES TO EXPAND THE USE OF VICINITY RFID IN IMPLEMENTING WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE**

### ***Radio Frequency Technology Will Be Deployed to Strengthen Border Security by Reading PASSport Cards at U.S. Borders***

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in conjunction with the Department of State’s proposed rulemaking on the new PASSport card, announced today that it proposes to expand the use of vicinity radio frequency identification (RFID) technology at U.S. ports of entry. The vicinity RFID technology, to be compatible with the PASSport card, would allow a travel document to be read from several feet as a vehicle approaches inspection. The PASSport card, part of the People Access Security Service (PASS) System, is designed to meet the specific requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) for U.S. citizens crossing U.S. borders by land or sea.

WHTI is the U.S. government’s plan to implement a provision of the Intelligence Reform Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which requires citizens of the United States, Canada, the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda and Mexico to have a passport or other designated document that establishes the bearer’s identity and nationality to enter or re-enter the United States. The proposal to expand the use of vicinity RFID technology is another step in the U.S. government’s layered plan to enhance our nation’s security, ensure the integrity of our immigration system, facilitate the flow of legitimate travel and trade, and protect the privacy of our citizens and visitors.

“Vicinity RFID technology will be a force multiplier for our U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers by providing them with up-front information they need to quickly make critical decisions about travelers entering or re-entering the United States,” said CBP Commissioner Ralph Basham. “The deployment of this advanced technological solution will improve public safety, national security and the integrity of the immigration process.”

Vicinity RFID technology leverages DHS’ successful experience with currently installed reader technology used in the FAST, NEXUS and SENTRI trusted traveler programs. These trusted traveler programs have more than a quarter of a million participants. In addition, through an ongoing test at land borders, US-VISIT has issued more than 459,000 radio frequency- enabled I-94, the standard arrival and departure record issued at ports of entry.

To protect the privacy of Americans who opt to use the PASSport card, no personal information will be stored or transmitted on the RFID chip on the card. The technology will transmit only a number between the card and the reader which will be matched against a DHS database. While no personally identifiable information will be transmitted, DHS is taking steps to help ensure that this number cannot be intercepted during transmission to an authorized reader at a port of entry.

Vicinity RFID, which is also used successfully in highway toll systems across the United States, demands little of the traveler and can read multiple cards simultaneously inside a vehicle. The vicinity RFID technology will increase the security of the border while facilitating commerce at the port of entry.

The proposed regulations of the PASSport card, a card-format passport compatible with this RFID technology have been published by the Department of State in the Federal Register. The proposed PASSport card will be credit-card sized and valid for use only at land and sea borders.

The proposed PASSport card would serve as an alternative to a traditional passport book for use by U.S. citizens who cross the land borders and travel on cruises to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. Frequent border crossers would benefit most readily from this new limited-use PASSport card. It would provide evidence of identity and citizenship, would be convenient to carry and would cost less than the traditional passport book. U.S. citizens would be able to apply for the PASSport card using the same forms and procedures as currently exist for the passport book.

The proposed regulations on the PASSport card are available for public viewing and comment at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) for a 60 day comment period. For more information, visit [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) or [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).