

Schumer to TSA: Keep funding for dogs

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T-Rex, an Amtrak Police explosive-sniffing canine, and his handler at Penn Station.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer lambasted the Transportation Security Administration for proposing local governments assume responsibility for overseeing bomb-sniffing dogs.

In a story published on Politico.com last week, TSA chief David Pekoske said the agency does not have enough funding to keep the program going, and he would like to turn the responsibility over to state and local governments.

Standing outside Penn Station on Sunday, Schumer (D-N.Y.) said the idea of eliminating the VIPR Canine Teams, or Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, does not make sense.

"These dogs can smell explosives in a way that machines often can't and they're mobile," Schumer said, adding that eliminating the dogs is a result of

"cost-cutting mania required by the administration."

Schumer said a total of \$58 million of the current federal budget has been set aside for the TSA's 31 dog teams across the country. The city has one team with roughly 30 TSA-funded dogs, which is more than any other locality, according to Schumer's office.

The Senate minority leader said these dogs are used at several important hubs, including Penn Station, ferry terminals and airports, and events such as parades and the New York City Marathon.

"We are a city of hustle and bustle," he said, adding: "It would be a huge safety gap because the dogs are able to do things that nothing else — man, machine, or anything else — can do."

A spokeswoman for the TSA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.