



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE *Securing the Nation's Rail and Transit Systems* *March 12, 2009 / 10:00 am*

Good morning. Today's hearing will focus on how well security programs have been operating in the rail and transit arena and how effectively federal dollars have been spent to protect the users of these systems from any incidents. These efforts are jointly run by the Transportation Security Administration, which is in charge of surface transportation security efforts, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is responsible for distributing grants annually to rail and transit systems to strengthen their security efforts. To date, including funds contained in the recently enacted economic recovery package, rail and transit entities have received a total of \$1.67 billion in grants for security enhancements, including infrastructure protection, deterrence, facility hardening, and employee training.

Worldwide, the most common transportation terrorist targets have been rail and transit systems. While we have been lucky in the United States, others have not been so fortunate. The attacks in Madrid, London, and Mumbai all come to mind when we discuss rail and transit security. More recently, on January 24th, the Indian Army recovered two powerful bombs near a railway station in the state of Assam. The bombs were discovered just two days before India's Republic Day celebration. As a result, the Assam government suspended night train operations until after the holiday out of concern for possible sabotage attempts. In addition, in Pakistan on February 7th, bus drivers began receiving letters from the Taliban threatening attacks by suicide bombers if western devices, such as audio and video equipment, were not removed. Finally, on February 18th, my own state of North Carolina had a bomb scare on Amtrak, but after dogs inspected the train for about four hours, the train was cleared.

While we have thus far been spared the type of violent attacks that have occurred elsewhere, we must be ever vigilant in our efforts to prevent incidents from occurring here. However, based on the Department of Homeland Security's first federal evaluation of mass transit security, transit and rail security efforts are not as vigorous as they should be. This report showed that 77 percent of the nation's largest rail and bus systems aren't meeting Homeland Security guidelines. By contrast, 96 percent of the airlines are complying with security requirements. This is not surprising, given that when the Transportation Security Administration was created in 2001, it was tasked with federalizing aviation security. Since that time, aviation security has received the preponderance of federal funding and attention. In comparison, other modes of transportation security, such as rail and transit, have remained under the purview of the local communities and the private sector, receiving yearly grant funds to address their highest security risks.

During Secretary Napolitano's confirmation hearing, she announced that she would focus on surface transportation security because "we have done an awful lot in the aviation world." Secretary Napolitano followed this up with a Secretarial directive asking TSA to review "the current strategies, plans and programs for security of the air, surface, and maritime transportation sectors, to include a side by side comparison of the threat environment, resources and personnel devoted to each transportation sector." The budget blueprint we received just two weeks ago places a renewed emphasis on transportation systems. It is my hope that today, we can discuss how TSA, and FEMA through its grants, plan to focus on rail and transit security, including what efforts the Department and the largest rail and transit entities are undertaking to improve the poor assessments they received.

We have a distinguished panel before us to discuss the security threats, vulnerabilities, and needs of our nation's rail and transit systems. The panel consists of Mr. John Sammon, TSA Assistant Administrator of Transportation Sector Network Management; Mr. Ross Ashley, Assistant Administrator for Grants of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; Mr. William Morange, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Security, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority; and Mr. Jack Eckles, Deputy Executive Officer, System Safety and Security, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. I welcome you all and appreciate your participation here today. I will ask Mr. Sammon to begin, followed by Mr. Ashley, Mr. Morange, and finally Mr. Eckles. If each of you could summarize your statement in

five minutes, your full written statement will be entered into the record. After all of you have concluded, we will proceed with questions.

But first I would like to recognize Ranking Member Rogers for an opening statement.

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