# Statement of Ms. Terrie S. Rouse
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# for the Capitol Visitor Center, Office of the Architect of the Capitol

## Regarding "A Growing Capitol Complex and Visitor Center: Needs for Transportation, Security, Greening, Energy and Maintenance"

## Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

## U.S. House of Representatives

## April 1, 2008

Madam Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to update you on the progress we have made to stand-up the Office of Visitor Services for the Capitol Visitor Center. We are working to ensure that the U.S. Capitol is a welcoming and educational environment that will inform, involve, and inspire everyone who visits – tourists and residents alike. We predict that the Visitor Center will become an exciting new destination – the programs and events are designed to entertain and to inspire multi-generational audiences. The programming will reflect the important impact that the Constitution, Congress, and more than 200 years of laws have had in the shaping of the fabric of daily life in the United States. Exciting experiences await our visitors -- a moving 13-minute orientation film that will begin a Capitol tour, an exhibition that includes a well-curated selection of documents and artifacts, as well as a specially-designed ten-foot touchable model of the Capitol Dome that will allow them an intimate view of this iconic structure.

In the six months since I arrived in Washington, I have been building upon the operations plan framework that was developed by the AOC, Congressional Leadership, and CVC Oversight Committees. My first priority was to create a hiring plan and recruit a team of experienced professionals. The first eight members of my staff have reported for duty and have hit the ground running. I am pleased to announce that Maurice Parrish joined us last month as our

Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Visitor Services. He comes to us following 17 years at the Detroit Institute of Arts where he recently served as Executive Vice President.

We are holding a job fair this month to hire more than 50 visitor assistants who will be our "front-line ambassadors" to the visiting public. I am committed to hiring a diverse and professional staff so I have directed our Human Resources Office to reach out to a number of Congressional caucuses, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and Congressional Native American Caucus, to inform potential candidates of job opportunities with the Visitor Center.

On another front, we are in the process of developing the necessary tools to assist the public in planning a trip to the Capitol – tools that will also help them learn more about Congress, the legislative process, and the history of the Capitol Building itself.

Our new Visitor Center Web site will be key to our comprehensive public education campaign to help people arrange a visit to the Capitol and to their Members' offices, and to begin their study of how Congress works. Millions of visitors – including many local residents – will visit the CVC in its first year of operation, and the Web site will help manage expectations by preparing the public with clear information about the Visitor Center from how to get there to the amenities and educational opportunities that await them. We have been working with our internal, local, and regional partners on every aspect of Visitor Center-related logistics, including, as we'll be talking about today, transportation to and from the Visitor Center.

Through our Web site, Members' offices will be able to more easily facilitate constituent tours by making real-time reservations for them. This "advance reservation system" for Members' offices -- as well as for the public -- will also assist us in reducing crowding at the Capitol during peak tourist season by optimizing the number of opportunities people will have to visit the Capitol.

Our online and in-person communications and outreach efforts will target a variety of audiences -- from Members' offices to area residents; from international travelers to people who've lived in

Washington all their lives; from visitors' bureaus to taxi drivers; and from seniors to schoolchildren. We especially want to keep our Capitol Hill neighbors informed of our efforts at the Visitor Center as any changes in pedestrian or vehicular traffic will affect them.

We have been working with our Oversight Committees on a Capitol tour action plan to ensure a positive visitor experience. Included in the plan is the institution of a new program: the Congressional Historical Interpretive Training Program, or CHIP.

CHIP training is for Congressional staff who give tours to ensure that they are appropriately prepared with accurate information to conduct constituent tours of the Capitol Building and exhibits. We will also train them in providing for the safety needs of constituents, if that becomes necessary. CHIP training will ensure that Congressional staff are properly equipped to lead constituent tours while allowing them the flexibility to give their tours a "personal touch" and some local flavor.

As I mentioned earlier, we have also been developing a series of first year programs and events. The dynamic nature of the legislative process and the art and architectural history of the Capitol will be presented through exhibits, lectures, films, seminars, online productions, family activities, and curricula and outreach to schools.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to update the Subcommittee on our activities. This concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions.