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Hearing on Transit and Rail Security
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Introduction

Chairman DeFazio, Chairman Brown and members of the subcommittees, my name is Peter J. Pantuso, and I serve as the President and CEO of the American Bus Association.

First of all, Chairman DeFazio and Chairman Brown, please accept my “thanks” and that of the industry I represent for scheduling this hearing and for your consideration of the issue of transit and rail security. The American Bus Association and its members take seriously the duty to provide bus passengers with safe and efficient transportation options at reasonable cost, and for the ABA “safe” also means “secure”. Your leadership and that of Committee Chairman James Oberstar has allowed ABA members to continue to hope that the security of the bus industry will be strengthened. The ABA looks forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

American Bus Association

The American Bus Association is the primary trade association representing the private over-the-road bus industry. While the name “American” and “Bus” may connote only bus transportation in the United States, our reach is much broader. ABA serves as the voice for almost 1,000 bus and tour operators throughout the U.S. and Canada, including American Coach Lines of Jacksonville, Florida, and in Portland, Oregon (the former Raz Transportation Company and Mears Transportation Group of Orlando, Florida are members. In addition, ABA represents a thousand hotel operators. Moreover, individual tourist attractions, such as the Empire State Building in New York City, the Hard Rock Cafes, and Sea World are ABA members. ABA also represents Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), for example, the Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County, Oregon; bus manufacturers, and other companies that service the private bus industry.

The ABA has 3800 members engaged in all manner of transportation, travel and tour services. In addition to the services noted above, our members provide commuter services, charter and tour operations, sightseeing and airport shuttle services throughout the nation. The private bus industry transports more than 600 million passengers each year, a total that compares favorably with the number of passengers carried by the nation's rail and airlines. In fact, the private bus industry carries more people in two weeks than Amtrak carries in one year. Moreover, ABA members link some 4347 bus terminals, airports and rail stations in the United States as opposed to the airlines' approximately 500 destinations and Amtrak's total number of destinations.

The difference between the bus industry, the airlines and Amtrak is that ABA bus operators are largely small businessmen and women – business people who operate in big cities and rural areas with little or most often no subsidy from the federal or state governments to support their day-to-day operations. And while the federal government continues to fund a massive effort to protect the airlines and Amtrak from further terrorist attacks, funds to aid the bus industry in the same effort have been, with one small exception, lacking.

Bus Security

Since the attacks on 9/11, the American Bus Association has been engaged in assessing the security needs of the bus industry. ABA bus operators have told us what they need to aid them in the protection of the industry. First, training is the highest priority. ABA members want to train their personnel, drivers, dispatchers and mechanics in the techniques of threat assessment, threat recognition and crisis management. Second, they need equipment. Examples of such equipment are cell phones, global positioning satellite (GPS) and other communications systems between drivers and dispatch and emergency first responders; driver shields; cameras for bus facilities and garages and staging areas; equipment to provide security “wanding” of bus passengers; as well as funds to provide other protection for significant bus passenger terminals at destinations such as Atlantic City, New Jersey, Orlando, Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Need for Federal Funds

While our list of programs and funds for bus security is on balance, a small one, the need for such federal funds is large. This is so because the private bus industry, for all of its reach and enormous passenger base, receives little public money and, as I have stated, the industry is one of small businessmen and women moving as many people annually as commercial airlines. Indeed, the average ABA member has eight to ten motorcoaches. The only two federal programs for which private bus operators are eligible are the so-called Section 5311(f) rural transportation fund which provides States with funds to subsidize intercity scheduled bus transportation and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) wheelchair accessibility fund which provides a small amount of money to allow private bus operators to place wheelchair lifts on buses. In the case of the section 5311(f) program, the amount of funds available is limited to 15% of the Section

5311 rural transportation program. The wheelchair lift program is funded at \$7 million. It is important to realize that the cost of putting one wheelchair lift on a bus is between \$35,000 and \$40,000 and the demand approaches \$40 million annually. As such, many ABA members find themselves hard pressed to put wheelchair lifts on buses even at the current federal contribution level of 90% available to bus operators' fortunate enough to obtain a grant.

Committee Efforts

The cost of wheelchair lifts highlights the necessity for federal funding, especially for security funds. The cost of security training and equipment is most and requires periodic updating. Of course, the committee is familiar with the cost of security. Over the past several Congresses, the Committee has worked with the ABA to provide the industry with funds for security. In 2002, the Committee reported, and the House approved, HR 3429. That bill would have provided \$99 million in grants to help bus operators improve security. Security improvements that are critical in that during the past 80 years, 50% of international terrorist attacks have occurred on buses or in bus stations. Another example of the Committee's efforts is its reporting of HR 875 in 2004. This bill also provided funds to aid in training, equipping and maintaining security for bus personnel, facilities and passengers.

Each of the above bills provided funds through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to private bus operators for the purposes detailed above. This legislation requires DHS to distribute these funds pursuant to applications from bus operators. The applications would detail the amount requested, the purposes for the grant, the operational "footprint" of the bus operator and the improved security that would be expected should the grant application be approved. The program would provide the maximum amount of protection for the largest number of bus passengers. For each bill, ABA proposed that DHS consult with ABA or its members in determining the most effective way of distributing the security funds.

Appropriations Process

While the Congress has not yet passed a comprehensive bus security bill, the efforts detailed above are important because they have provided a glimpse of how to improve the nation's bus security. The American Bus Association has worked with the Congressional Appropriations Committees to secure bus security funds over the last several years. Since FY 2002 ABA has obtained some \$50 million for bus security grants little more than \$10 million per year. This amount is significantly short of the \$18 billion dollars that Congress has given the airline industry or the billions spent on Amtrak in the same time frame. Yet, these funds have allowed the private bus industry to take modest but necessary steps to improve security.

These funds have been distributed by DHS as a result of a competitive grant program each year. The application period for funds appropriated for FY 2007 closed last week. ABA expects the grant winners to be announced in mid summer. The

approximately \$11 million that will be distributed this year will be divided among scheduled service operators and charter and tour bus operators. ABA believes that while this division of funds is logical, DHS's application process does not result in the optimum use of security funds. The flaw in the funds distribution is one this Committee must consider repairing before finalizing its transit and rail security bill.

The Use of Security Funds

Since the advent of bus security funds in FY 2002, the private bus industry has put the funds to good use. Greyhound Lines, Inc. used security grant funds and its own funds to develop a driver lateral shield with which Greyhound bus drivers can fend off attacks. Greyhound also used funds to increase passenger "wandering" at its larger terminals. Greyhound will randomly provide passenger "wandering" to a select portion of its schedule at specific locations. Badger Coach Lines, a charter and tour bus company in Wisconsin, used a grant to purchase its own screening equipment, e.g., metal detectors and handheld wandling devices. Other ABA members used grant money to install cameras in their maintenance facilities and staging areas, provide more protection in these areas, and provide drivers with cell phones. Several other ABA members used grant money to begin the process of installing Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) tracking technology to provide real time information on the location of their equipment. All of these efforts are worthy of security funding and should be continued.

In prior years DHS also disallowed funds to be used by certain segments of the industry and more recently for security training. In FY 2004 and 2005 ABA, in concert with the United Motorcoach Association (UMA), used grant money to begin a training program for bus company personnel. Our effort to train personnel in threat recognition and assessment and crisis management was one in which we "trained the trainers." We made the effort to train the safety and security directors of bus operating companies and to have them return home to train others in their companies.

ABA developed and used security training manuals and instructional CDs, all of which we provided at no cost to the students. The American Bus Association conducted sessions in several locations in the United States and was quite pleased with the results. Fully 90% of the evaluations we received found that the ABA security training program was "excellent" or "very good." In total, this ABA effort provided security training to some 200 bus operator personnel. ABA would like to mount such an effort again. But there is resistance on the part of DHS to allow organizations like ABA to apply for security grant funding. It is ABA's hope that the Committee will allow trade associations like ABA to apply for such funding in the future. We remain the only "vehicle" to pull together these smaller companies and provide the necessary guidance.

At this point I would like to reiterate that the bus operator efforts to improve security would largely not have been possible without federal funds. After 9/11 and before the availability of federal funds, few bus operators were able to fund any such security efforts without incurring increased costs. As one example, may I cite the efforts of C&J Trailways, an ABA member in New Hampshire. After 9/11, C&J Trailways

instituted a program in which all tickets were sold in the passenger's name after positive identification. This alone required the addition of staff at company operated terminals during peak traffic periods.

Even with the bus security funds available, the security costs to the bus industry increased. C&J Trailways expends over 100 hours each year in employee training related to security. The collective cost for the provision of these services and training exceeds \$90,000 on an annualized basis. Prior to 9/11, Greyhound estimates that it was spending approximately \$5 million annually on security. After 9/11, its costs increased to \$10 million annually. These costs will continue to increase.

The Future

The security efforts and the cost I have detailed is testimony to the ongoing need for transportation security funding in general and bus security funding in particular. There is a growing need for GPS systems, for updating security training materials, and for additional "train the trainers" seminars in more locations. And of course, there is the need for continual updating of security equipment in terminals and garages.

Moreover, as the nation continues to strengthen the segments of the transportation system, it will also need to place more emphasis on the coordination of security between transportation modes and the communications infrastructure needed to share sensitive information between government and private transportation assets. These expenses cannot be borne by the private bus industry and must be accomplished by the government working with the private transportation industry in a grant program similar to that contemplated by the Committee.

Conclusion

The private bus industry and the American Bus Association looks forward to working with you, Chairman DeFazio and you Chairman Brown, your subcommittees and the full Committee to ensure that our private bus transportation system, which is second to none in safety, reliability and low cost, retains its ranking when "security" is added to that list. Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions.

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