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AND

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Chairman DeFazio, Chairwoman Brown, Ranking Members Duncan and Shuster, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the more than 180,000 members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on the ATU's priorities and strategies for enhancing transit security. I also want to applaud this Committee's continued focus on this important and urgent issue.

The ATU is the largest labor union representing public transportation employees in the United States and Canada. ATU members are bus, van, subway, and light rail operators, clerks, baggage handlers and maintenance employees in urban transit, over-the-road and school bus industries, as well as paramedical personnel, ambulance operators, clerical personnel, and municipal workers.

The issue of transportation security is one that our members are confronted with on a daily basis. As vehicle operators and mechanics, our members are responsible for protecting the safety and security of not only themselves, but also their passengers. This is an awesome responsibility and one our members are ready to live up to, so long as they are provided with the tools and training necessary to equip them to prevent or, if necessary, respond to a terrorist or other emergency incident. We need the federal government to step in now and provide these workers and their employers with the necessary resources and requirements to protect our nation's public transportation systems.

Public transportation, by its very nature, is an attractive target for crime and terrorist attacks. It brings masses of people together, is open, highly visible and familiar, and when threatened or attacked, it can disrupt commerce, instill fear and bring an entire region to a grinding halt.

The recent examples of the Mumbai, London, Moscow and Madrid bombings - all within the last three years - are tragic examples of this reality.

In London we saw the crippling effects that such an attack can have on an entire community. When four suicide bombers detonated explosive devices in the London Underground and aboard a double-decker bus, 56 people died and more than 700 people were injured. In addition, the entire City of London was paralyzed as citizens were left with no way to or from work, and others, including tourists, steered clear of the city for fear of additional attacks. A separate failed attempt two weeks later similarly stalled normal operations in London and surrounding areas.

A decade earlier, ongoing bombing campaigns directed at the Paris Metro resulted in hundreds of casualties; and the release of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system threatened the lives of between 5,000 and 6,000 people, resulting in 12 deaths and marking the first time chemical or biological weapons have been deployed on a large scale by terrorists.

And this isn't just happening in our rail systems. In Israel and elsewhere, buses have too often been the targets of terrorist bombings.

Unfortunately, similar incidents are likely to happen on our soil, in our transit systems.

The ATU's Role in Transit Security

Faced with this reality, the ATU has for years worked to raise the awareness of our members and their employers to this danger and to advance real, concrete solutions and initiatives to enhance the safety and security of the systems operated and maintained by ATU members.

We strongly believe that the labor community must be a partner in any comprehensive effort to address the security threats facing our industries. For that reason, we have worked closely with our members, the transit and bus industries, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and elected officials at all levels of government, including many members of this committee.

Shortly after September 11th, the ATU produced and distributed a security training video and pamphlets providing guidance to our members on how to prevent, deter and respond in emergency situations. We also conducted a joint labor-management conference on transit security that was attended by more than 100 transit agency officials and employees from across the U.S. We worked with DOT and industry security experts to develop *Transit*

Watch, a nationwide safety and security awareness program that encourages the active participation and vigilance of transit passengers and employees. And we contributed to the design, distribution and promotion of the National Transit Institute's security and emergency response training programs for frontline transit employees.

We have also testified numerous times before Congress on this issue, including earlier this year before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. We have continuously advocated for increased funding for transit security enhancements and for required training for all frontline transit employees. In this realm, we have assisted in developing legislation, including legislation introduced by Members of this Committee, which would enhance transit security.

Most recently, the ATU joined with APTA on the Mass Transit Sector Coordinating Council, which is tasked with the identification and prioritization of security measures within the mass transit industry and assisting in the development and implementation of plans to address these priorities.

The Need for Federal Government Action

The transit and over-the-road bus industries themselves have also taken admirable steps toward securing their operations, but - due in large part to funding constraints - they have not gone far enough. The reality is that these industries and the ATU can not do this alone.

The federal government must step up to the plate and provide the necessary funding, guidance and even mandates to provide the level of security that transit and over-the-road bus passengers and employees deserve. The federal government has not yet stepped up to the plate.

More than two years ago, Congress directed the Administration to take comprehensive steps to address transportation security risks, including risks faced by the transit and over-the-road bus industries. It was not until the very end of last year that President Bush issued an order to Secretary Chertoff to draft a plan to address security issues in the transit industry.

Now is not a time for drafting plans, it is a time for concrete action. The federal government must provide funding directly to transit agencies and over-the-road bus companies for security purposes and must ensure that frontline employees are prepared in the event of an emergency.

With much of the emphasis on airlines, rail and port security, no sector of our transportation network has been more neglected when it comes to security than transit. The deficiency in security funding for this industry is staggering. While the industry has estimated the actual need to be \$6 billion in order to adequately secure the network, only a sliver of that has already been provided and the budget requests submitted by the Administration have been woefully inadequate.

Security Training for Transit Employees

In addition to funding, it is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that certain necessary steps are taken to enhance security.

Common sense tells us that the single most important thing that we can do to increase transit security is to provide each and every frontline transit employee - including rail and bus operators, customer service personnel and maintenance employees - with security and emergency preparedness and response training.

While we should not abandon research and deployment of new technologies, we need to recognize what has been proven to be the most cost-effective security measure: employee training.

In the event of a terrorist attack within a mass transit system, the response of employees at the scene within the first few minutes is crucial to minimizing the loss of life and to evacuating passengers away from the incident. Transit employees are the first on the scene, even before police, firefighters or emergency medical responders. They must know what to do in order to save the lives of their passengers and themselves. Further, they need to be trained to recognize security threats and need to know the appropriate protocols to follow for reporting and responding to potential threats.

Security experts, government officials and transit and over-the-road bus industry officials have all agreed that training is the most essential element of an effective security regime.

In fact, just last week, the TSA Office of Grants and Training issued a bulletin to all of our nation's transit systems stating "[r]ecent assessments and evaluations have highlighted the fact that security training for front-line employees of transit systems is a critical vulnerability that must be addressed as soon as possible." The bulletin states that transit agencies applying for grants for security training will receive elevated priority and further specifies that all frontline transit employees should be provided with annual training in security awareness, behavior recognition, and immediate emergency response.

While we are pleased that the agency has recognized the importance of training, experience tells us that without the adequate funding and mandates, the necessary training will not be provided.

Some transit systems, including most recently WMATA here in D.C., have chosen to train all of their frontline employees, and others are making comprehensive efforts to likewise train their employees. We applaud these systems for their commitment to security. Unfortunately, they are not the majority in the industry.

Most transit workers are simply not receiving the training they need. I know this because I talk to our members and they tell me they are scared - not because they know there is a threat, but because they feel unprepared if such an emergency occurs. And, sadly, it is not only members from smaller transit systems and bus operations that I hear this from. Employees of major transit systems in major U.S. cities tell me that they have not received any emergency response training.

In many cases, workers receive at most a piece of paper asking them to be “vigilant” and to be aware of suspicious persons or packages. Other workers have watched a short 10 - 15 minute video. These materials do nothing to prepare a worker for a real security incident. Employees need to receive, at a minimum, 8 full hours of training on an annual basis.

The National Transit Institute, which is funded by the Federal Transit Administration, has developed numerous mode and employee-specific training programs that have been widely approved and tested by the ATU, APTA, FTA, TSA and others in the transit industry. Unfortunately, these programs, which are available free-of-charge to any U.S. transit agency, - have only been provided to less than a quarter of our nation’s transit employees.

Despite the availability of these free programs and almost unanimous agreement in the industry about the need for training, transit systems continue to resist calls for training

because of the operating costs to pay employees and keep the buses and trains running during training sessions.

It is beyond time for the federal government to step in and to not only provide funding for the operating costs associated with training, but to also require all transit systems to train each and every frontline transit employee. It is the role of the federal government to ensure that this happens. Leaving it exclusively to the will of the industry is, as experience dictates, not sufficient.

The Rail and Public Transportation Security Act

I want to applaud the members and leaders of this committee, in this Congress and the previous sessions of Congress, for recognizing the need for federal government action in this realm. The recently introduced Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 1269), as well as legislation passed by this Committee in the previous session, would go a long way toward addressing the needs of our nation's transit systems and their employees.

Not only would this legislation provide significant funding resources directly to transit agencies and over-the-road bus companies for crucial capital enhancements, such as perimeter protection systems, communications equipment, and decontamination equipment, but it also recognizes the need for training by requiring that all frontline employees receive the necessary training. The bill would further require consultation with employee

representatives in the development and implementation of security priorities and measures. The ATU is very supportive of these provisions.

We need to take action now to address the security needs of the transit and over-the-road bus industries - and most importantly to train the workers in this industries. Doing so now will save lives.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the ATU. I can not stress enough how important it is to include the input of transportation labor in this discussion. It is our members who are on the front lines of this battle and who know best what dangers they face everyday on the job. I appreciate your recognition of this fact and look forward to working with you to address the important issues raised here today.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

