

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Securing Our Nation's Mass Transit Systems Against a Terrorist Attack***

May 4, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Securing Our Nation’s Mass Transit Systems Against a Terrorist Attack”:

“Thirty-four million people use the Nation’s rail and mass transit systems each day.

Despite this reality and over my objections, earlier this year, the Continuing Resolution for FY 2011, which was passed by the House, decreased discretionary spending for securing those modes of transportation by \$4.5 million below last year’s level---23% below the President’s budget request.

Under this budget-cutting regime, the Transportation Security Grant Program will be reduced by \$50 million.

While only about one dollar for each rider, these funds purchase a great deal. Transit agencies use this federal money to hire law enforcement officers, acquire bomb-sniffing dogs, and install explosive screening devices. They also use this money to finance capital projects that keep riders safe, such as hardening tunnels, installing surveillance systems, and establishing perimeter security controls.

This \$50 million cut will have an obvious and immediate impact on the security of transit riders. Unfortunately, this funding cut is not the only problem facing the Transportation Security Grant Program.

In 2009, GAO found that TSA had failed to incorporate vulnerability information in the program. Although the Department agreed with GAO’s recommendation, it has not found a way to comply. If a plan exists to incorporate this information, I would like it to be provided to the Committee today.

In 2010, the Department’s Inspector General found that FEMA had failed to develop a process to collect and analyze program performance measures for TSGP grants. Without performance measures, it is impossible to determine the effectiveness of the program and whether the grant programs are achieving risk reduction. If performance measures exist, I would like FEMA to provide them to the Committee today.

Taken together, these reports set forth a clear need for program reforms that bring about a risk-based and accountable system.

Finally, I look forward to joining with the Chairman to restore funding in this critical area. In the wake of Osama Bin Laden’s killing, we have an obligation to protect mass transit and the 34 million people who rely on it.”

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