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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Securing Public Areas of Transportation Systems: Stakeholder Perspectives

Subcommittee on Transportation & Protective Security

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Immediately following the September 11, 2001 attacks, resources were rightfully focused on building a Federal agency to protect the aviation sector. However, in the 16 years since the attacks, the threat to surface transportation has steadily increased. Both nationally and internationally, we have seen terrorists target surface transportation systems.

The 2004 commuter train attacks in Madrid, 2005 London tube bombings, 2015 Paris train attack, and 2016 metro station attacks in Brussels underscore that bustling surface transportation hubs are attractive terrorist targets. Similarly, the surface transportation terrorist incidents domestically are trending upward as well.

For example, in 2008, an individual was arrested for sharing details of the Long Island Railroad with al Qaeda in an effort to help bomb New York City's Penn Station. In September 2009, three individuals were arrested for planning to detonate backpack bombs at Grand Central Station and Times Square.

In 2016, police successfully detected and removed pipe bombs at a New Jersey train station. And, just last month, a terrorist mowed down 19 pedestrians on a bike path in Lower Manhattan. That ISIL-inspired attack resulted in the deaths of eight people.

The Federal government must do more to help State and local stakeholders make surface transportation systems more secure. With each passing terrorist attack on surface transportation, our enemies grow more emboldened to commit these heinous acts.

Today's hearing provides the opportunity for an honest discussion about how the Federal government can be better partner with key stakeholders, like the ones represented by today's witnesses, to raise the bar with respect to protecting at-risk surface transportation systems.

Certainly, action on the legislation that Representative Watson Coleman, a leader on transportation security matters on the Committee, will be introducing later today—the "Surface Transportation and Public Area Security Act of 2017"—would be a major step

forward in putting the Federal government on a path to making these systems, which are essential to our Nation's economy, more secure.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

