

## Statement of Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman

### Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security Joint Hearing

#### *Securing Our Surface Transportation Systems: Examining the Department of Homeland Security's Role in Surface Transportation Technologies*

**Tuesday, January 30, 2018**

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Surface transportation systems, which include freight and passenger trains, commuter rail, mass transit, buses, and pipelines, are vital to the economy of the United States. Every day, millions of Americans rely on these transportation systems. An attack against these systems could be devastating—and terrorists have taken note.

In recent years, terrorists have targeted surface transportation systems overseas, including attacks in London and Brussels. Last month, the threat to public transit systems hit home, as a would-be suicide attacker detonated a pipe bomb near Times Square, within the New York City subway system. Luckily, the bomb failed to detonate fully, and the bomber was the only person seriously injured.

Nevertheless, the attack proved that the U.S. is not immune to the types of attacks we have witnessed overseas. The ability of “lone wolf” extremists with little to no training, financial support, or direction to carry out attacks against soft targets demands increased attention and collaboration at all levels of government.

Securing such complex, busy transportation systems requires a variety of security measures, including the development and deployment of innovative technologies capable of detecting threats without creating congestion.

To develop new technologies, TSA has established “test beds” with many of the country’s largest mass transit and passenger rail agencies to test promising technologies in the field.

While these projects may prove useful, it is clear they do not receive the same attention that aviation technology development receives. TSA’s recent “Biennial Strategic Five-Year Technology Investment Plan Refresh,” which lays out TSA’s plans for investing in security technology, makes no mention of these project—or of surface transportation at all.

In addition, unlike in aviation, when these technology pilots deliver effective solutions, TSA does not purchase the equipment for deployment. Instead, it falls to local transportation authorities to pay for these technologies, and many of them cannot afford to do so without Federal support. The American Public Transit Association has testified that transit agencies across the United States have identified \$6 billion in capital and operational security requirements.

We are currently awaiting the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 budget request, but I would note that, in the face of this massive need and a frightening threat picture, the President’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018 suggests cutting what little Federal support exists for surface transportation security.

The President wants to cut the Transit Security Grant Program—the primary source of Federal security funds for most transit agencies—from \$88 million to just \$48 million. He wants to cut TSA’s Visible

Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) program—which deploys TSA personnel to conduct security operations at transportation venues—from 31 teams to just 8. These cuts are reckless. We cannot allow this administration to turn a blind eye to the threats facing our surface transportation systems.

That is why I have introduced the *Surface Transportation and Public Area Security Act of 2017*, which would restore and resource these important activities, as well as provide a comprehensive approach to boosting Federal programs aimed at securing these vital systems.

Crucially, my bill would authorize \$400 million for the Transit Security Grant Program, which would provide a small but significant step in addressing the \$6 billion gap in security needs. That funding would allow transit agencies to purchase some of the innovative technologies our witnesses will discuss today.

Additionally, my bill would direct TSA's Innovation Task Force to expand its work beyond aviation security and seek technologies with potential to enhance surface transportation security, providing another avenue for testing new technologies. My bill would also direct DHS to report to Congress on emerging security technologies within the surface transportation mode—a necessity since such technologies were left out of TSA's recent report.

It is time that we finally give surface transportation security the attention it requires.