

Statement of Ranking Member Donald M. Payne, Jr.

Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications Joint Hearing

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

January 30, 2018

I represent Newark and Jersey City, which are two of the largest cities in the state of New Jersey. Every day, my constituents rely on New Jersey Transit, PATH, and Amtrak trains to commute within the tristate area.

Two years ago, following a horrific attack on the Brussels metro system, I was pleased that my Subcommittee held a field hearing in my district to learn more about how the Federal government could help prevent a similar incident from happening in the busiest surface transportation corridors in the country. At the hearing, we also considered how first responders coordinate with transit owners and operators to ensure we are prepared if – God forbid – such an attack did occur. We brought together representatives from the Transportation Security Administration, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, New Jersey Transit, New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Amtrak, and had a robust discussion.

There were two major takeaways. The vast majority of TSA's resources support securing aviation travel, so the primary responsibility for securing surface transportation infrastructure falls on owners and operators. Owners and operators rely on the DHS Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP) funding to install and maintain technology and security operations that keep transit systems secure without jeopardizing passenger flow. These findings were reiterated at the field hearing held in Ms. Watson Coleman's district late last year.

As Ranking Member of the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee, I have fought for TSGP funding and to ensure that the Department's research and development efforts are responsive to the threat environment and needs of transit owners and operators.

So when the President released his FY 2018 budget last year, I was troubled to see that he proposed slashing TSGP grant funding by 52 percent. On top of that, the President's budget proposed to gut the Urban Area Security Initiative and the State Homeland Security Grant Program by over \$270 million.

DHS's suite of grant programs work in concert to make high risk targets - like our surface transit systems – more secure. Attempts to cut them in this threat environment reflect a genuine disconnect from reality. As we anticipate the FY 2019 budget proposal, I hope the Administration has come to its senses and will request more adequate funding for these important programs.

Moreover, I hope that Congress enacts a full year spending bill for FY 2018 so that grant funds are made available to our communities to make surface transportation more secure.

Before I close, I would like to acknowledge that the President's FY 2018 budget also made dramatic cuts to the Science and Technology Directorate. Although much of S&T's transportation work was not affected, other programs that could complement its surface transportation efforts were. I implore the Administration to submit a responsible budget that recognizes the connectivity between various important S&T research programs.

In the meantime, I will continue to support H.R. 4474, Ms. Watson Coleman's Surface Transportation and Public Area Security Act, which addresses pressing transit security gaps, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.