



One Hundred Twelfth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On Wednesday, May 4, 2011, the Committee on Homeland Security held a hearing entitled "Securing Our Nation's Mass Transit Systems Against a Terrorist Attack".¹ Representatives from three transit authorities testified about the effect of reductions in the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Grant Program (TSGP) on the security of mass transit systems.²

At the hearing, witnesses representing the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police Department, the Chicago Transit Agency (CTA) and the New York City Police Department (NYPD), respectively, gave compelling testimony regarding the critical role TSGP plays in mass transit security. In response to a question from Ranking Member Thompson about the likely continuation of transit security measures if cuts are allowed to take effect, Mr. Richard Rodriguez, President of the CTA, stated that "[N]either the state of Illinois, City of Chicago or CTA has the financial resources to support these efforts." BART's Deputy Chief of Police Daniel Hartwig said "I fear that we would cease to exist." Mr. Richard Daddario, Deputy Commissioner of Counterterrorism for the NYPD, said "[W]ithout the grant funds, the New York transit system would have to roll back programs intended to benefit the public."

¹ http://homeland.edgeboss.net/wmedia/homeland/chs_112th/05_04_11_full.wvx

² The *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007* required the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a program for making grants to eligible public transportation agencies for security improvements. DHS fulfilled this requirement through the Transportation Security Grant Program (P.L. 110-53, § 1406, 121 Stat. 266, 405-08).

Earlier this year, Congress passed the *Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011* which reduces the appropriation for the TSGP for FY 2011 by an alarming \$50 million (20%) below the enacted level for FY 2010.³ 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.

The concerns raised by the witnesses at the May 4th hearing have been raised by many others in the public transportation sector.⁴ These concerns are not without merit. Recent open source media reports indicate that Al Qaeda may have been attempting a major attack on U.S. rail systems.⁵

According to the National Counter-Terrorism Center's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, from January 2004 to July 2008, 530 terrorist attacks were waged worldwide against mass transit and passenger rail targets, resulting in over 2,000 deaths and over 9,000 injuries. In 2009, law enforcement entities uncovered and disrupted a plot to attack the New York City subway system, demonstrating in stark terms that urban area transit systems in the United States are terrorist targets just as much as those in London, Madrid, and Mumbai. In March 2010, terrorists bombed multiple targets within the Moscow subway system in quick succession, again revealing new terrorist strategies for maximizing damage and casualties.

Based on the recent history of terrorist attacks on mass transit systems throughout the world, revealed plots to attack U.S. rail assets, and the heavy reliance of transit agencies on the TSGP, we are writing to you to ask that you consider restoring funding cuts to the TSGP and other surface security programs for fiscal year (FY) 2011.

Congress must ensure that the 34 million rail and transit passenger trips taken each weekday in this country are safe and secure. Restoring this funding will send a strong message that our transportation systems will not be vulnerable to an evolving threat of terrorism.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress

³ P.L. 112-10.

⁴ American Public Transit Association, Letter to Speaker of the House John Boehner, April 14, 2011.

⁵ Mazetti, M., Shane, S., *Data Show Bin Laden Plots; C.I.A. Hid Near Raided House*, New York Times, May 5, 2011.


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