

**WRITTEN STATEMENT**

**WANDA Y. DUNHAM**

**ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER**

**AND**

**CHIEF OF POLICE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

**2424 PIEDMONT ROAD, NE**

**ATLANTA, GA 30324**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY**

**JULY 12, 2011**

**HEARING ON INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES: AUTHORIZING THE  
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FOR FY 2012  
AND 2013**



Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, in Atlanta, GA and as a representative of public transportation systems throughout our nation. My name is Wanda Dunham and I am privileged to serve as the Police Chief and Assistant General Manager, for Police Services and Emergency Management to the 9<sup>th</sup> largest public transportation system in our great nation. As you may be aware, MARTA is one of eight identified Tier 1 transit agencies in the nation, which means that it warrants especially high considerations for security investments. I speak to you as someone with more than 24 years of police experience in a mass transit environment, as a member of the TSA Peer Advisor Group and as someone who collaborates within the industry as a member of the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Committee on Public Safety. Sincerely, I truly appreciate your interest in improving public transportation security across the United States. My testimony today is to speak to the growing demand and need for continued homeland security-related investments.

### **MARTA OVERVIEW**

There exists no priority higher than the safety and security of the more than 500,000 unlinked passenger trips we deliver on a daily basis. Our multi-modal transit system includes 48 miles of heavy rail serving 38 stations with 318 railcars and 505 buses on 91 routes. Our rail system, which began service in 1979, has a direct connection to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. As MARTA has expanded over the last three decades to remain an economic engine for the region, so has our attention to security-related needs and proactive strategies. MARTA is the longest-serving transit police agency in the country designated as a CALEA (The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement) certified agency. MARTA Police is a full-time, full service agency with 321 sworn officers including detectives, uniform patrol, and explosive detection units, etc. It is the availability of resources such as the Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP) and a collaborative effort with federal, state, local agencies and community partners that has allowed MARTA Police to implement multi-level, comprehensive strategies to ensure the safety of our riders. Now, more-so than ever, recent events and intelligence regarding terrorist plans reinforces our need to be all the more vigilant and continue to make security-related investments a high national priority.

### **TSA & MARTA COLLABORATION**

The Transit Security Grant Program and other federal funding programs remain a significant resource in the development and implementation of key countermeasures against terrorist threats. Since 2003, MARTA has received approximately \$31 million in federal funding in support of various target hardening and security initiatives. With the support of this investment, MARTA has been able to develop or expand key programs, such as the following:

- The implementation of homeland Security CCTV cameras in all 38 stations, with cameras soon to be installed in over 500 buses and 200 railcars.
- Increased access control systems at a number of critical infrastructures.
- Conducted over 10 Homeland Security Emergency and Evaluation Plan (HSEEP) compliant security exercises within the last 5 years to include various state, local, and federal partners.

- Enhanced protective measures (e.g., fencing, lighting, barrier gates) at critical and vulnerable infrastructures such as rail yards and bus garages.
- Secured & updated more effective bomb abatement equipment such as a Total Containment Vessel (TCV) and a bomb robot.
- Acquired 15 bomb-detecting canine teams, including 3 “vapor wake” canine teams that can actually detect the presence of odors related to an explosive device.

I would like to spend a few minutes to discuss the canine teams at MARTA. Proudly, I am pleased to report that MARTA has been at the forefront in the use of this unique canine application in the detection of explosive devices. We were the first transit agency to be part of the Canine Explosives Detection program for TSA at Lackland Air Force Base, in San Antonio, Texas. Since our involvement with the TSA canine program, our canine teams have received numerous ‘Top Dog’ recognitions for their exemplary performance. In August 2004, MARTA was asked to participate in a pilot program for the first vapor wake canine program in the country. This program was spearheaded by the prestigious Auburn University Canine Detection Training Center in Auburn, Alabama. Our canine, Tabbie, was the first graduate of this impressive training program. Although Tabbie was retired last year, we recognize her today for her 6 years of dedicated service to our department. Since the Auburn program’s inception, we have had five additional canines who have participated in this exceptional program.

We have discovered that transit riders report feeling safer when Canine Units are present. Their presence and visibility has helped to prevent the introduction of explosive devices and deter criminal activity in the transit system, all the while providing a more secure environment for our customers. I cannot say enough about the TSA Canine Program. TSA is committed to this program and has done an excellent job providing transit agencies such as MARTA with the resources to keep this program viable and accessible to assist in the fight against terror on our systems.

Furthermore, TSA has been responsive to many of our concerns within the transit community. For example, we recognize and appreciate the recent changes to the Transit Security Grant Program guidelines to allow for maintenance and sustainability as allowable expenses, and the revised timeline for the execution of capital projects from 36 to 48 months.

Most recently, the TSA Administrator, John Pistole, visited MARTA to witness firsthand the many effective security measures made possible through TSA grant funding.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT WITH TSGP FUNDING**

While there has been a great degree of progress made at MARTA and other transit systems across the country, there is still much work that is required to continue to keep our nation safe. Much of the effort and focus of the investments to date has been in the area of infrastructure and target hardening. Many transit systems are experiencing the need for additional funding and broader funding guidelines to leverage existing capital investments with operational support. An increase in the limitation on operational funding from 10 percent to 20 percent and allowing personnel cost, where the need can be strongly substantiated, will be of great support to many transit systems. For instance, a COPS program specifically for transit has been a funding proposal strongly supported by other Tier 1 agencies.

Additionally, recent intelligence information has substantiated what, we've known for some time, that is, those that mean to do our country harm have not eased up on their determination. In addition, we've also learned that transit systems remain highly vulnerable for potential attacks. To that point, it is highly recommended that Congress reauthorize the TSGP at levels similar to those authorized under the 9/11 Commission Act. The eligible use of funds included in Section 1406(b) of the 9/11 Commission Act should be maintained and broadened. This measure would allow for transit systems to continue to provide security countermeasures at all vulnerable locations at risk of terrorist attack versus having to prioritize vulnerable assets based on funding restrictions.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate and coordinate with other public safety agencies, such as police and fire, is vital to our ability to respond and guard against any perceived or real threats. Legislation in Congress to allocate spectrum to public safety agencies has the potential to further the interoperability challenges among transportation agencies. A change in the definition of public safety in Section 337 is recommended to reflect the need of transit security and emergency services to access the public safety spectrum for emergency service purposes. MARTA also supports the allocation of the 700 MHz spectrum (D-Block) to public safety, if the aforementioned change is made.

Finally, we also urge the Committee to support the security legislative recommendations of the American Public Transportation Association, including support for the Public Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (PT-ISAC) and Security Standards programs, which have been submitted to the Committee under separate cover.

I cannot emphasize how important and critical the financial support provided by Congress through the TSGP has been to the local and regional efforts across the country in keeping our customers safe. Unfortunately, we cannot say that the threat today is any less than it was ten years ago. As we prepare at a regional level to ensure we are responsive and prepared for new and emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century security threats, the support of Congress and your continued commitment to keep in stride with the financial needs are critical to our success.

## **CONCLUSION**

I appreciate the Committee for allowing me to provide testimony on these critical security-related issues. MARTA and our fellow transit agencies look forward to working with you and the members of the Committee as you work to develop this next critical authorization bill. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.