

Statement of Richard L. Rodriguez
President
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Chairman King, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Chicago Transit Authority, commonly known as the CTA. I also would like to acknowledge my two home-state Congressmen on the Committee, Representatives Danny Davis and Joe Walsh. Accompanying me today is CTA's Chief Safety & Security Officer, Amy Kovalan.

The CTA provides 1.7 million trips each weekday on our bus and rail network, including the 'L' or "elevated" rail service that has come to symbolize Chicago transit. As the second largest transit agency in the nation, the Chicago Transit Authority continually examines ways to enhance measures for the safety and security of our customers and employees. We focus on three key areas: infrastructure improvements, emergency communications, and coordination and operational security.

I am proud to report that in March of this year the CTA was recognized by the Department of Homeland Security for achieving high scores in all categories of the security inspection program for transit. The Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement, also known as BASE, was developed as a comprehensive review of security programs and focuses on 17 categories identified by the transit community as fundamental for a sound transit security program.

These categories include –

- security program management and accountability,
- security and emergency response training, drills and exercises,
- public awareness,
- protective measures for DHS threat levels,
- physical security,
- personnel security,
- and information sharing and security.

Our system received high scores across all BASE categories, which very few transit systems have achieved.

Since 2006, grants from the Department of Homeland Security have been solely responsible for allowing CTA to make significant technology upgrades to the security and surveillance network, add the necessary security personnel, and enrich training programs for these individuals so they are ready to handle situations that may pose a threat to our system.

Our latest infrastructure initiative to combat crime and deter terrorism is the installation of high-resolution digital security cameras. DHS funding is being used to equip all 144 CTA rail stations with multiple cameras. The networked cameras allow CTA, the Chicago Police Department, and Chicago's Office of Emergency Management and Communication to gain a clearer picture of an emergency situation and respond accordingly.

We are also planning on retrofitting CTA's rail car fleet with security cameras. There are new rail cars on order that will come equipped with cameras, but we feel it is critical to have the entire fleet be outfitted. All buses in our fleet have been equipped with cameras since 2003.

In recent years the Transportation Security Administration has provided additional resources in the form of Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response or VIPR teams, which are deployed at airports and on transit. They provide a random, unannounced, highly -visible supplemental security presence.

CTA has also received dogs from the TSA's Explosive Detection Canine Team Program. The K-9s are funded through DHS and are part of the Chicago Police Department's Transportation Section.

The dogs are paired with handlers to detect explosives and are used to respond to reports of unattended or suspicious items. These dogs are trained to find improvised explosive devices and are used on trains, buses, platforms and stations.

DHS funding has allowed CTA to fully leverage technology to enhance security, but the human element is still critical. Training for employees and encouraging our riders to be part of the security presence is an important part of our efforts.

The FTA has launched a nationwide safety and security awareness program - called Transit Watch – which encourages transit passengers and employees to report anything suspicious or dangerous.

The CTA's "See Something-Say Something" campaign is similar to the Transit Watch program and provides information and instructions to transit passengers and employees so that they know what to do and whom to contact in the event of an emergency. This campaign was borrowed from the MTA in 2002 and encourages riders to report any suspicious activity they observe.

In addition, CTA has participated and continues to participate in training for a number of scenarios using a range of programs. We have increased the frequency of our system checks, tightened access, and continually train our operations, facilities and maintenance employees to recognize suspicious activity, packages or substances. CTA participates in drills involving the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Fire Department, OEMC and other agencies regarding bomb threats, fires and HAZMAT situations.

For everything I have mentioned, DHS funding has been the resource that has made these measures possible. Without that funding, none of these efforts could continue. Neither the state of Illinois, city of Chicago or CTA has the financial resources to support these efforts.

Unfortunately, Congress was recently forced to tighten its fiscal belt, and the FEMA Transit Security grants that the CTA receives annually took a one-sixth cut to its FY 11 budget – from \$300 million to \$250 million. Last year the CTA received \$6.8 million under this program, and the CTA will put the money to good use to install security cameras on 400 rail cars this year. The CTA had planned to use future funds to install cameras on the rest of its rail cars in 2012, but the 16 percent cut will likely force the CTA to finish installing these important cameras in 2013 or 2014 at the earliest.

Before I close, I would be remiss if I didn't comment on the good news that President Obama announced late Sunday night, and how a subsequent heightened state of alert impacts agencies like the CTA. The CTA actively monitors terrorism-related threats, incidents, and events locally, nationally and internationally. When circumstances warrant, such as the death of Osama bin Laden, the CTA takes a number of steps of steps to ensure our employees and customers remain vigilant.

Steps include communicating with our federal, state and local partners; re-issuing security bulletins to remind employees of what activities to look for and what steps to take should they encounter any suspicious or criminal activity during the course of their duties; and reminding our customers that vigilance and awareness of their surroundings is an important part of our safety efforts and encouraging them to report any unusual or suspicious activity to 9-1-1 or to CTA personnel.

In a free country, there is no such thing as a closed and perfect system. Transit systems across the country are inherently open environments designed to move people quickly to their destinations. It is a careful balance to strike between security and personal mobility but we feel that we have found a good balance. We are determined to make our system as safe and user-friendly as possible, and to provide ready transportation consistent with the commitment to safety.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify here today. I will be happy to answer any questions from you or the other distinguished Members of the Committee.

