



**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY)
Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee**

*Protecting Our Passengers:
Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New Jersey and New York
June 21, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

Thank you all for being here today.

First, I'd like to thank the New Jersey City University for hosting us today, as well as Ranking Member Payne, who has focused a great deal on our shared priority of transportation security.

Now especially, with a threat environment that's the highest since 9/11, it's critically important to examine our region's surface transportation security.

We're here to learn how Federal partners, transit agencies, and first responders are working together to protect the passengers from the type of hate-filled violence that hit Orlando last week.

As that attack tragically reminded us, the threats from terrorist organizations and their sympathizers are not going away. They're evolving and increasing.

Now more than ever, Congress needs to do everything it can to assist stakeholders in building and sustaining their capabilities to prevent, protect against, and – God forbid – respond to a terrorist attack.

Today, stakeholders from State and local government, the private sector, and surface transportation networks are giving their time to share with us their perspectives on achieving our shared goal of protecting millions of regional commuters.

We'll look specifically at the preparedness and response capabilities of surface transportation systems in New York and New Jersey, one of the highest-threat regions in the world.

Surface transportation networks serve more than 10 billion riders annually. MTA alone moves more than 8.7 million residents on their subways, buses, and commuter rail lines each day.

It's no surprise, then, that nearly 15 years after the tragedy in lower Manhattan, our transportation systems remain a top target for international terror organizations.

This isn't a new threat. We've seen the devastating impacts of an attack against transportation systems, most recently a bombing at a metro station in Brussels. Since 2002, authorities have thwarted six terrorist plots against mass transit systems in the United States.

Alarming, five out of those six plots were against systems serving the New York metropolitan region.

As the threat grows, we need to ensure that surface transportation systems and first responders have the resources needed to respond to acts of terrorism and other emergencies.

That's why we convened this hearing today. We wanted to hear from the people here on the ground – not hundreds of miles away in Washington – about what's working and what's not.

Back in April, this Subcommittee held a very informative roundtable discussion with the Subcommittee on Transportation Security regarding this issue.

We heard from multiple transit agencies, many of whom are represented on our first panel today, about how they're collaborating with Federal partners, like the Transportation Security Administration, to secure their infrastructure.

I hope we can build upon that discussion today.

You know, when I came to Congress and attended my first few hearings, I asked my staff: "What happens when these hearings are finished? Who uses this information and how?"

I assure you that the information gathered today will help form the policies we enact to improve security for our region's commuters.

I'm particularly interested in learning more about how our witnesses use the Transit Security Grant Program and other Homeland Security grants, and if there are needed changes or enhancements to these programs that Congress should address.

Also, I'm interested in hearing more about how security personnel for mass transit systems coordinate with the Federal government and local first responders to ensure everyone is prepared to respond to incidents.

And how are our witnesses working with other transit agencies to share threat information and best practices?

I want to thank all of the witnesses for testifying today. We have two very distinguished panels before us and I look forward to learning how they're protecting passengers and what we, as Congress, can do to help mitigate any gaps.

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