



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

“Securing Public Areas of Transportation Systems: Stakeholder Perspectives”

November 28, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

Before I begin I would first like to thank the City of Trenton for graciously hosting us today. I am pleased to be joined by Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick to discuss a topic that is vital to the safety and economic vitality of the Northeast region and the greater United States. I applaud the Ranking Member for her hard work and dedication to homeland security and it is an honor to be here today in your district to hear directly from both your and Congressman Fitzpatrick’s constituents on how to better secure transit systems.

Mass transit is critical to the livelihood of many Americans and provides an integral backbone to the economy of the region. Recent terror attacks like the one in Brussels that targeted an international airport and a metro station, have made us more cognizant than ever of the vulnerabilities in our transportation systems. Surface transportation systems are a very attractive target due to their large volume of daily ridership and open infrastructure. Mass transit systems face unique challenges in screening passengers, closing resource gaps, and targeting assistance from the Department of Homeland Security.

To put this into context, surface transportation modes serve over 10 billion riders annually compared to an average of 800 million U.S. aviation passengers per year, and it is our duty to ensure that local stakeholders and law enforcement have the resources they need to keep their riders and their systems safe.

The purpose of today’s hearing is to assess our ability and readiness to detect and disrupt threats to our nation’s critical surface transportation systems. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the current threat landscape, as well as the effectiveness of established security measures. Surface transportation systems are largely owned and operated by state and local entities, complicating the Department of Homeland Security’s responsibility as the primary federal agency responsible for securing the numerous and diverse modes of transit. These systems are difficult to secure due to their open infrastructure, multiple access points, hubs serving multiple carriers, and in some cases, lack of access barriers. Additionally, considering the significant volume of daily ridership via surface transportation modes, delays or system shutdowns in response to threats can cripple the local economy. The multi-layer security approach at airports, including advance passenger screening, metal detectors, X-ray machines, advanced imaging technology, explosive detection canines, and armed law enforcement personnel, cannot be easily replicated in the surface

transportation sector. The delays and costs associated with such measures would undermine the affordability and expediency of mass transit.

Easy accessibility and relative affordability are part of what makes mass transit and rail transportation so popular among the American public and help keep our local, regional, and national economies humming. However, these benefits can also be exploited by terrorists as inherent vulnerabilities in surface transportation. Because of the difficulties associated with security screening people and goods on a train, metro, or bus, intelligence-sharing deterrence and detection measures are extremely important. The security of a transit environment that spans multiple geographic jurisdictions and that integrates multiple law enforcement agencies depends upon seamless interagency coordination. All of you were invited here today because you are on the front lines, and your firsthand knowledge and expertise is invaluable. I look forward to hearing from all of you about how the federal government can better coordinate with state and local surface transportation partners and law enforcement personnel to protect the traveling public.

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