



NO MORE EXCUSES – SECURE MASS TRANSIT AND RAIL NOW

March 11 will mark the third anniversary of the rail bombings in Madrid, Spain that killed 191 people and wounded 1,900. In July, the world will mark the second anniversary of the attacks in London when terrorists struck at the heart of our ally's mass transit system, killing 52, injuring 700 and shutting down a major city. With these grim attacks as stark reminders and more than five years since 9/11, it is simply disgraceful that the Bush Administration has done so little to secure this critical component of our transportation network and that Congress has failed to pass a comprehensive rail and mass transit security bill. The time for more delay and excuses is over. With or without Administration support, Congress must move to enact meaningful rail and mass transit security legislation.

The importance of investing significant resources into securing transit and rail operations should no longer be a debatable point. In addition to the attacks we have already seen in this country and abroad, the vast openness and size of our rail and mass transit systems presents an all too tempting target. Each weekday, 11.3 million passengers in 35 metropolitan areas and 22 states use some type of rail transit. Overall, Americans take over 9.7 billion trips on public transportation each year. Amtrak operates over a 22,000 mile network, serves 500 stations and carries more than 25 million passengers. And our freight rail system operates on a 24/7 basis over 142,000 miles of track and transports 1.7 million carloads of hazardous materials annually. While eliminating all security risks to this extensive system would be impossible, more must be done to harden targets and to address vulnerabilities.

First and foremost, security training for front-line workers must be mandatory and comprehensive enough so that employees understand how to identify risks and what to do in case of a threat or attack. The value and importance of both initial and recurrent training has been confirmed by security experts and touted by policy makers. But unless training is made mandatory and universal standards are set by the federal government, our experience is that employers will too often skimp on this most basic security enhancement. For these reasons, transportation labor will oppose any rail and mass transit security bill that does not include mandatory security training.

We must also ensure that workers are free to report security concerns without facing retaliation or harassment from their employer. This has been an unfortunate reality in the rail sector for far too long and enhanced whistleblower protections for all employees must be included in any legislation as well. It defies common sense and threatens our homeland security to expect front-line workers to be more vigilant while failing to provide them the strongest protections from employer harassment and intimidation.

Rail and mass transit security have also been grossly under-funded. According to a report issued last year by the House Homeland Security Committee, \$9 per airline passenger has been spent on security compared with only one penny per passenger for rail and mass transit. By way of example, millions are needed to upgrade passenger rail tunnels along the Northeast corridor,

security cameras are non-existent in too many stations, and biological and chemical detection systems are expensive technologies that cannot be solely adsorbed by local public authorities. During the heightened state of national alert instituted after the London attacks, U.S. transit systems spent an estimated \$900,000 per day from July 7 to August 12, 2005. Overtime costs for security and other personnel continue to rise and place significant burdens on these systems. Clearly, Amtrak and public transit agencies are in dire need of additional and consistent security funding from Washington and any bill must at least make a down payment on the billions in capital and operational needs identified by the industry.

We are pleased that Congress does appear ready to address these needs and to pass comprehensive rail and mass transit security legislation. Last month the Senate Commerce Committee passed its rail security bill and the Senate Banking Committee approved its transit security bill. Both measures have been incorporated in the 9/11 Commission bill under consideration in the Senate. And last week, the House Homeland Security Transportation Subcommittee approved its rail and transit bill. Separately, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leaders, including Chairman Jim Oberstar, Reps. Corrine Brown and Peter DeFazio, introduced the Rail and Public Transit Security Act with hearings starting next week. We hope that leaders from both parties will work to make sure these bills are approved quickly. We also call on the Administration to support these important legislative initiatives.

Mass transit and rail security are simply too important to treat as the ugly stepchild in our homeland security regime any longer. Congress must step in now to close vulnerabilities, ensure workers are being trained, and make it a priority to protect the millions who rely on mass transit and rail everyday from terrorist threats.

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