

**Testimony of the Honorable Jennifer L. Dorn
Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs
December 13, 2001
9:00 a.m.**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding the security of our nation's transit systems and what we are doing to help protect America's public transportation passengers, employees, and infrastructure.

Every year, America's public transportation systems carry more than 9 billion passengers and employ nearly 400,000 people. Our public transportation infrastructure – subways, light rail, buses, ferries, and commuter railroad services – is valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. Ensuring the security of the Americans who depend upon this infrastructure, as well as the security of these important assets, has always been an important duty of every transit agency. The events of September 11th have proven to all of us that this responsibility must receive careful attention and well thought out response in order to keep our communities safe and moving.

The State Department reports that in 1991, 20 percent of all violent attacks world-wide were against transportation targets; by 1998, 40 percent involved transportation targets, with a growing number directed at bus and rail systems. The recent attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon using hijacked airliners reminds us all that we must respond to a new terrorist reality – terrorism that is well-financed, well-organized, and ruthless. The credible threat of increasing terrorism directed toward our nation's transportation systems requires that we take immediate prudent action to prevent, prepare for and respond to violence.

The story of how New York City's transit workers responded on September 11th – protecting transit passengers and employees and helping to evacuate the city -- is well known, and Washington D.C.'s Metro was similarly responsive and effective. Less well known is the fact that bus and rail systems throughout the nation acted promptly and effectively to evacuate downtown areas and transport thousands of passengers stranded at airports all over the country. Many transit systems instituted well-rehearsed emergency response plans – setting up command centers, calling in all personnel to duty, foregoing fare collection in order to expedite travel, and, quite literally, going the extra mile for their passengers.

At the Department of Transportation, in order to respond to the new level of threat, within days of September 11th, Secretary Mineta created the National Infrastructure Security Committee (NISC). NISC's mission is to execute pre-emptive, preventive, protective, and recovery efforts for critical elements of the U.S. national transportation system. FTA is working with NISC, the states, and transit agencies to identify high value/high consequence transportation operations and structures, as well as their current protection strategies and any gaps that may exist.

The nation's transit systems are inherently "open" environments. They are designed to move people quickly through an urban area, and, therefore, must provide quick, easy access to passengers. In addition, they are intended to make low cost transportation alternatives available to everyone, and, therefore, must have cost structures that support affordable transportation. As we work to improve transit security, we must be mindful of the need to protect our freedom of movement and to keep our public transportation systems economically sustainable. This "three-legged stool" of security, mobility, and economic vitality is one that requires careful adjustment to ensure an appropriate balance. Recognizing this, our security focus is on prioritizing security risks, managing risks to acceptable levels, and mitigating the impact of potential terrorist incidents.

Immediately after the September 11th attacks, FTA compiled and sent over 1,000 Security Toolkits to transit operators throughout the country. The toolkit information is intended to assist public transit operators as they reevaluate potential security threats, emergency response plans, employee training needs, and measures to communicate with the public about transit safety and security. The toolkits have been extremely well received, and include public transportation security resource guides, planning tools, training opportunities, and sample public awareness publications.

In addition, FTA has undertaken a five-part security initiative to help enhance the security of the nation's public transportation systems and help our public transportation agencies cope with these new threats. To support these initiatives, we have reprioritized FTA's discretionary funding, and the President has requested funds for public transit safety and security in the emergency supplemental that is currently under consideration by Congress. The five components of FTA's security initiative are: assessment, planning, testing, training, and technology.

First, assessment. Enhancing transit security must begin with an in-depth, professional assessment of the threats to and vulnerabilities of each transit system. Beginning December 17, 2001, and continuing over the next 90 days, FTA will deploy

expert security assessment teams to the 30 largest transit agencies. The teams will use proven threat and vulnerability assessment methodologies to assess the security gaps in the agencies' high consequence assets and make specific recommendations to reduce the risks to acceptable levels. In addition, the teams will assess the agencies' emergency response plans and the coordination of their emergency response efforts with associated fire, police, and other emergency response agencies.

The assessments will help public transportation agencies identify security threats and develop practical solutions to the concerns that are raised. This is not a "one size fits all" undertaking; every transit system has different components – tunnels, bridges, open rights-of-way – and different intersections with other means of transportation – connecting with airports, train stations, highways. Some of our transit systems are 100 years old and coping with design features that could never have anticipated even the criminal, let alone the terrorist, threats of today. Other systems are brand-new, built using security-minded design concepts and state-of-the-art technology. The risk mitigation strategies for such systems will be different.

The second component of FTA's security initiative is planning. Effective response to an act of terrorism requires instantaneous and sound decision-making in a volatile, high-pressure environment. Our largest transit operations already have emergency response plans, but need to reexamine their plans in light of today's potential threats.

FTA will provide hands-on assistance to transit agencies as they develop and refine their emergency response plans in light of their security assessment findings and heightened terrorist threats. These plans serve as blueprints for action in the wake of an attack. They articulate the steps to take in order to notify authorities of the incident, evacuate passengers, protect personnel and equipment, activate a unified command and communications system among transit, police, fire and emergency medical units, and restore the system to normal. In the wake of a terrorist attack or even a natural disaster, we cannot afford to lose precious moments simply trying to figure out what to do; plans must be in place.

The third component involves testing. In the "lessons learned" from the tragic events of September 11th, New York and Washington transit officials have emphasized how important it was that they had conducted regular emergency drills. In addition to having an emergency response plan in place, they recommend that every transit agency conduct regular emergency drills -- not just fire drills -- to keep skills sharp, update response plans, and build personal relationships with counterparts in the police, fire and emergency medical response organizations. FTA will be working with local transit agencies to

conduct full-scale emergency drills to test their plans and equipment.

Fourth, we will be offering additional security training and workshops. It is imperative that we have a transit workforce that understands security issues and is fully prepared to respond should an emergency occur. We have expanded our free security and emergency response training to incorporate new security strategies and tactics, and, in order to give more local transit employees the opportunity to attend, we will be offering regional security workshops. The first eight workshops are scheduled in early 2002, and will include transit managers, fire and police, and municipal emergency operations management personnel.

The final component of our security initiative involves technology and research. First, \$2 million of FY 2002 research funding will be used to fund security-related transit research under the auspices of the Transit Cooperative Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences. In addition, FTA has reprioritized its FY 2002 budget to devote funds to improve the Transit Safety and Security Reporting Module of the National Transit Database; to identify technological options for a nationwide Transit Emergency Notification system; and to implement the recently developed Bus Safety Program. We have also requested additional funds in the emergency supplemental to identify promising Defense Department and other federal agency technologies that could be adapted for use by transit agencies to enhance security, lower security costs, and reduce the impact of heightened security measures on human resource requirements.

As you may be aware, the Project PROTECT chemical detection system, which is being prototyped in the Washington D.C. subway system, is an example of the kind of technology that may be adapted for use in transit security. In order to assist all systems in the near term, however, FTA is developing and will soon issue guidelines for the handling of chemical and biological incidents in a subway environment.

Public transportation agencies around the nation have stepped up security efforts in the wake of September 11th. Many have increased the number of security personnel in stations and on transit vehicles, purchased protective equipment for transit personnel who will be the first to respond in an emergency, removing trash receptacles where explosives could be hidden, and reminding the public how they can help. FTA is pleased to be a part of the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) security task force, and to have the opportunity to work with APTA and its members to enhance the security of our nation's public transportation systems.

As you know, FTA is fundamentally a grant-making agency. We manage \$8 billion in grants for programs ranging from the purchase of buses to the construction of new light

rail and subway systems. We also provide training and technical assistance to local transit agencies. We are neither an operational agency, nor a traditional regulatory agency.

I have been extremely impressed by the level of collaboration and cooperation among transit agencies and with the FTA on matters of safety and security. Yet one of the greatest challenges that we all face is ensuring that the safety and security of our transit systems remains a high priority in years to come. The sustainability of any requirements, programs and funding we put in place today must be considered as we move forward – particularly in light of other costs that loom on the horizon. Although a number of brand new systems are being built throughout the nation, we also have many aging systems that need rehabilitation and redesign. And figuring out a way to accomplish all that needs to be done will be a challenge for every level of government.

I want to thank the committee for conducting this hearing. I am eager to work with you to keep our communities safe and moving – because United We Ride.

Thank you.