

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD A. WHITE  
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BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
OF  
THE UNITED STATES SENATE  
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Chairman Lieberman and Members of the Committee, good morning, and thank you for asking me to testify on transit infrastructure protection. I am Richard White, and I am proud to serve as General Manager of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

WMATA=s Unique Role in the National Capital Region

By way of background, WMATA was created in 1967 through enactment of legislation by the U.S. Congress, and by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia. In fact, WMATA=s original enabling legislation, The National Capital Transportation Act, and all subsequent amendments to that law, originated in this Committee. Construction of the 103-mile Metrorail System was funded as a separate authorization measure, subject to annual appropriations from the General Fund. This approach, which Congress used only for Metrorail construction funding within the transit industry, recognized the unique relationship of the WMATA system to the efficient operations of the federal government.

The Metro System was designed primarily to serve the employees of the federal government, the citizens of our region and the entire nation who come to Washington to do business with the federal government, and the millions of people who visit the National Capital Region from throughout the world.

Today, approximately 40 percent of the region=s residents who commute to jobs in the National Capital Core Area use transit. This service removes 325,000 vehicles from the road and eliminates the need for 1,400 highway lane miles. Half of Metrorail stations serve federal facilities, and about 36 percent of the locally based federal workforce use the Metro system to commute to work. We carry more than 1.1 million daily trips on our rail and bus system, so the important work of the region can continue under all circumstances.

Being located in the National Capital Region, we recognize our special role in serving the federal government and the federal city. We perform that role everyday whether it is helping to transport a major portion of the locally based federal workforce to their job sites or providing transit and enhanced security for large crowds attending a presidential inauguration or a special event or rally on the National Mall.

Even before September 11th, WMATA had a number of plans and procedures in place to address prevention and mitigation of service disruptions, preparedness and emergency

response, and service recovery. We had prepared System Safety and System Security Program Plans; had developed operating procedures and plans to guide a variety of operational response situations; had established procedures and practices for activating our Emergency Operations Command Center (EOC); and had created redundant communications systems. In addition, we have been conducting annual counter-terrorism and explosive incident training for police and operations personnel, as well as providing a high level of interagency coordination and training programs and exercises with the many federal, state and local law enforcement and fire and emergency rescue agencies in the metropolitan area.

The safety and security preparations that we had in place prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> served us well on that tragic day. As an organization, we have spent a considerable amount of time and resources on emergency preparedness, particularly in the aftermath of the 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo Subway. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, we moved into a heightened state of alert immediately after the World Trade Center bombing in New York City, and converted to our emergency operations procedures immediately following the Pentagon incident. We became a primary mode of evacuation, in effect running back-to-back rush hour service, as workers and others quickly fled the city, often leaving their cars behind.

Although WMATA handled its mission well on that day, we now face altered expectations from our customers, many of whom work for the federal government. The most significant issue facing WMATA is adapting to the post- September 11 reality that our freedom of mobility has been challenged. Security is paramount in the minds of our riders. WMATA is considered one of the safest transit systems in the country, but since September 11, we have explored areas where we can strengthen and enhance our existing security measures, including our ability to rapidly evacuate the city, should that become necessary.

#### Request for Security Funding

We recently have conducted an updated comprehensive risk assessment of our revenue and non-revenue facilities and equipment. On October 12<sup>th</sup> we sent a request to the Office of Management and Budget Director Daniels detailing our a request of \$190 million in security funding requirements based on the security assessments that have been made to date. I am submitting for the record a copy of our request to OMB Director Daniels.

#### Emergency Planning in the National Capital Region

We are working closely with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), as a key member of a transportation committee, to ensure that our Metro system is recognized as a vital component of this region=s homeland defense and emergency response strategy. The important work of that transportation committee is now bringing together all the region=s transportation implementation agencies (DCDOT, VDOT, MDOT) and the region=s 11 transit providers to open the lines of communication and coordination in an emergency situation, and to develop a plan or Aplay book@ for any number of situations that may arise in the future. This effort, however, cannot stand on its own. As part of a broader effort, the MWCOG has created a Task Force on Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness for the purpose of

establishing a truly regional emergency response plan that includes public safety and emergency management, health, water and energy infrastructure, waste and debris management, communications, and transportation components. This Task Force has developed many preliminary reports, with recommendations, to improve security of our residents and visitors and better protect our region's critical infrastructure. It expects to have a Regional Incident Communications System in place by early next calendar year, and to have a fully developed regional emergency response plan in place by Spring, 2002. We hope that it will prove to be a model plan for other cities to follow.

#### WMATA's Role in National Capital Region Security

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I believe that WMATA will play an even greater role in our national defense and homeland security in the months and years ahead. Now is the time for the nation to consider that transit systems truly are a part of the national defense system, and to contemplate the value of transit as the evacuation method of choice, and possibly necessity, during emergency situations.

Every mode of transportation is important during emergencies, but transit is able to move people much more quickly and efficiently than congested roads and highways can. The nation needs to view our transit systems in this national defense context in order to properly recognize the new reality. Given the fact that WMATA is located in the National Capital Region and is so integral to the workings of the federal government, there is an even greater need to make sure that the Metro System can meet the operational and security challenges of the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world.

While we are moving as rapidly as possible, within our funding resources, to enhance safety and security in the Metro System, we must also acknowledge that we barely have sufficient capacity to serve the ridership growth we have been experiencing in recent years. Although we have seen a recent dip in ridership since September 11<sup>th</sup>, we are reasonably confident that this is a temporary phenomenon and expect our ridership to rebound to its previous levels.

There are many transportation related decisions under discussion in the metropolitan Washington region, including further restricting parking and closing streets in the vicinity of federal buildings. It is inevitable that the outcome of these decisions will mean an even greater role for WMATA in serving the mobility needs of federal workers, and certainly in the event of an emergency.

In order for WMATA to fulfill this new urban defense role, we must act to enhance the security and capacity of our infrastructure, including our stations, vehicles, structures, facilities, signaling and communications systems. Our rail system, now 25 years old, was built as a two track railroad with little redundancy or ability to re-route trains in response to an emergency. We have extremely limited underground storage capacity, and often must bring trains from long distances to replace a disabled train.

With respect to bus operations, this region has approximately the same number of buses

today that it had fifteen years ago, before the recent significant population and employment growth in this area. As a result, if we needed to rely on a large number of buses to transport individuals in the event of an emergency, or if a portion of our rail system is incapacitated, we do not have sufficient spare buses for this service. Transit service in New York City was able to be partially restored after September 11<sup>th</sup> due to the configuration of their system. New York's multiple rail lines, with connections between lines, gave it the ability to re-route trains and to continue to provide service after some of its rail lines were destroyed. To adequately prepare for emergency situations, WMATA must connect its rail lines in order to provide alternative paths if a portion of the system is incapacitated. We must have more flexibility and redundancy if we are to be fully prepared to respond to all situations. Both security and capacity of our infrastructure and equipment must be enhanced at significant additional cost, if we are to protect transit riders and be able to serve this region in case of an emergency evacuation. Over three decades ago, the Congress, the Eisenhower Administration, and local leaders recognized the unique federal-regional partnership that was necessary in the National Capital Region to create a transit system worthy of the nation's capital. That unparalleled partnership has endured and WMATA has become a model for the nation, as Congress originally envisioned. Today, other transit systems look to us for guidance on operating, construction, safety, security and other matters. We urge you to consider the vast challenges WMATA faces as the transit system for the nation's capital, as well as how lessons learned in this environment can be transferred and used throughout the nation.

#### Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding a hearing on this important subject. The issues raised today are difficult and, unfortunately, often expensive to address. On behalf of the WMATA Board of Directors, employees and our customers, we applaud your leadership in examining the issue of transit infrastructure protection. We have reached out to various parts of the federal government including the Office of Homeland Security, the Office of Management and Budget, and several Cabinet agencies, including the Department of Transportation, seeking funding, technical assistance and guidance as we move aggressively to enhance the level of protection of riders on America's Transit System. We look forward to having a dialogue with this Committee as you examine the federal government's role, particularly in the Nation Capital Region, in ensuring that the Metro System continues to be not only one of the safest transit systems in the world, but also one that is well prepared to meet the demands of the new millennium, especially in the event of an emergency. I would be pleased to answer your questions.