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Opening Statement Rep. Danny K. Davis, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census, and National Archives Hearing on "Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: Is there a Security Gap"

June 23, 2011

Thank you, Chairman Gowdy for holding this hearing on WMATA transit security. The events of September 11th, 2001, brought the issue of transportation security and terrorism to prominence. Subsequent attacks in Moscow, London and Madrid have further highlighted terrorism as a global threat to public transit. Transit security is especially challenging, due primarily to the very nature of the business. It's open, accessible to the public, with predictable routes and fixed access points. And more importantly, it's the transportation of choice for the masses in urban and metropolitan areas.

Further, transit officials cannot employ many of the security strategies used in aviation. Transit does not allow the conventional security methods of x-ray machines, metal detectors, and prescreening of passengers.

I do not envy the balancing act that must take place- ensuring the safety, accessibility and convenience of the transit system, while also maintaining the attractiveness and reliability of the system. But it must be done and done well.

When people choose public transit, they should receive both a high degree of safety and security, as well as convenience, all at an affordable costs.

Today's hearing will look at all these issues, but none more than security. The operation of a secure transit environment that spans multiple jurisdictions geographically, and that must integrate the specialties of multiple law enforcement agencies, depends upon interagency and jurisdictional coordination and cooperation. That can be hard to do without practice, superior communication and rigorous oversight. I am interested today in learning from these witnesses just how they have accomplished and improved this task.

WMATA, similar to transit systems across the country are constantly evaluating and evolving new procedures, techniques and systems to increase security. Even in my home city of Chicago, CTA recently announced this week new security initiatives- a doubling of the amount

of all- angle security cameras across the rail system. Hopefully, this type of initiative deters crime, as well as decreases opportunities for domestic or international terrorists to attack our country. WMATA, I am certain, has similar resources. So, I am very interested in today's topic and greatly anticipate the testimony we will hear. Transit security is a timely and necessary topic. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.