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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and National Archives

Hearing on “Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: Is There a Security Gap?”

June 24, 2011

As a member of both the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I know how critical the Metro system is to the Federal government and the entire metropolitan Washington region.

And as a kid who depended on the bus to take me to a better school on the other side of Baltimore, I also know how critical public transit is to – as the Metro says – opening doors.

I appreciate the opportunity today’s hearing provides to consider security on the Metro system. This system serves 86 stations and carries more than half a million passengers every day.

Given their openness, transit systems are inherently vulnerable to a variety of potential security threats. This is particularly true of the Washington Metro, which is such a visible part of our national capital’s infrastructure.

It is critical that we understand the full range of threats confronting Metro, as well as any gaps that may exist in Metro’s defenses.

Effective security on the Metro requires the system to counter threats of terrorism, but it also requires the system to protect passengers and system operators from other possible threats. I am deeply troubled by reports of violence against Metro bus drivers, and I want to understand what can be done to ensure drivers’ safety.

Given the threats that Metro and all transit systems in our nation face, it is inexplicable to me that the House appropriation for the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2012, which provided funding for transit security programs, was less than half of the Administration’s request.

The Republican leadership in the House has also proposed deep cuts across the board to other transportation programs.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, maintaining the current funding baseline over the next six years for highway and transit programs would require \$331 billion. The Republican budget would provide only \$219 billion, cutting investments in highway and transit programs by more than \$100 billion.

We simply cannot maintain our competitiveness as a nation by failing to make investments that enable us to build, maintain, and protect our essential transportation infrastructure.

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