

March 25, 2009

The Honorable David Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price:

On behalf of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and its nearly 1,500 member organizations, I write to inform you of the funding needs and other priorities to ensure the security of America's transit agencies and their riders for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. As you know, ridership on public transportation once again reached new record levels of 10.7 billion trips in 2008 – the highest levels seen in 52 years. However, the potential threats posed to public transportation continue to be a concern, and the partnership of the federal government in addressing our security investment needs remains critical.

APTA asks the committee to provide appropriations for the FY 2010 Transit Security Grant Program in the amount of \$900 million, the level authorized under the 9/11 Commission Recommendation Act of 2007. We appreciate Congress' recognition of the importance of securing our nation's transit systems by providing substantial funding in the FY 2009 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations bill and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. However, those funding levels have not met the overwhelming security needs identified by APTA members. We further ask that you again include language that directs DHS to award funds directly to transit agencies, prohibits DHS from imposing a local match requirement, consistent with Congressional intent expressed in the conference report of the 9/11 Commission Act.

We also request that the committee provide \$600,000 to maintain and operate the Public Transit Information Sharing Analysis Center (ISAC), which was authorized under the 9/11 Commission bill under Section 1410(d). APTA has not yet received funds from DHS for the ISAC for FY 2009, and it is critical that additional funds are made available to keep this important tool operational. In addition, we request \$500,000 for DHS grant funding for continuing development of a transit security standards program. APTA is a federally recognized Standards Development Organization (SDO). The ISAC and standards are two important national programs that, although modest in funding needs, can significantly enhance transit security at the local level.

APTA supports the efforts of the committee to continue its oversight of the delays associated with the approval of grants and the release of transit security grant funds. Many agencies remain frustrated with a process that has been inconsistent from year to year and fails to meet the goals and intent of the program – to provide investments in transit security in a risk-based and timely manner.

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Finally, APTA opposes the administration's budget proposal to provide an additional \$50 million in funding to support 15 additional Visual Intermodal Protection and Response (VIPR) Teams, for "unannounced" deployment to transit hubs. While we appreciate that the Homeland Security budget cites as a priority "making the Federal Government a better partner to States and localities on key homeland security initiatives," we are concerned that investments in the VIPR program may be made without proper coordination with transit agencies and local law enforcement officials. Section 1303 of the 9/11 Commission Act authorizing the use of VIPR teams, specifically requires consultation with all relevant authorities, including public transportation agencies, in advance of and during deployment of such VIPR teams.

Safety and security are important priorities for the public transportation industry. Transit systems have taken many steps to improve security prior to 9/11 with minimal federal funding. Since September 11, 2001, public transit agencies in the United States have spent billions of dollars for security, emergency preparedness and related technology from their own budgets. Fighting terrorism is a part of national defense, a federal responsibility. Terrorist acts in Mumbai, London and Madrid make clear the need to strengthen security on U.S. public transit systems. Continued investments will assist us in preventing an occurrence of such terrorist attacks in this country.

We appreciate your support in providing financial resources for the security of our country's public transportation infrastructure. We look forward to working with you on transit security issues in the coming months and thank you for your leadership. Please have your staff contact Brian Tynan of APTA's Government Affairs Department at (202) 496-4897 or email btynan@apta.com if you have any questions about this matter or if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William W. Millar". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

William W. Millar
President

WWM/tjj