



Written Testimony of  
Mortimer Downey, Chairman, Board of Directors  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Before a joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Public Assets and the  
Subcommittee on Government Operations under the Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Friday, February 13, 2015

Chairman Mica, Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member DeSaulnier, Ranking  
Member Connolly and Members of the Subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to  
testify today. I am Mort Downey, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Washington  
Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, known as Metro.

First, I would like to express my condolences to the family of Carol Glover, who  
lost her life following an incident in the Metro system on January 12<sup>th</sup>, and I'd like to  
thank the first responders who came to the aid of everyone involved in that incident.

An investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is now  
underway, and Metro is fully engaged and cooperating with the effort. We recognize  
that a complete and impartial review depends upon confidentiality, and our participation  
at today's hearing is consistent with the ground rules laid out by the NTSB.

Metro has provided NTSB investigators with access to conduct several track  
walks and examine equipment, and we have submitted more than 650 documents  
containing 7,300 pages of information, including: 372 hours of surveillance video, 300  
photographs, fire alarm records, equipment maintenance records, training and  
operations records, and passenger and witness statements.

Having worked with the NTSB, we know that the agency's formal recommendations will give an even more complete view of what is to be done, as was the case in the 2009 Fort Totten accident. We stand ready to take action on any recommendations – including preliminary findings.

Just two days ago, the NTSB issued its first recommendations to Metro and the entire industry, concerning training and inspection of tunnel ventilation systems. In line with those recommendations, Metro has already conducted a thorough test of our subway tunnel ventilation system and provided familiarization training for all 39 controllers at our Rail Operations Control Center. We are now in the process of developing additional protocols and training associated with tunnel fan use in response to the NTSB recommendations.

Now, as the NTSB continues its review; we are not waiting. Metro has identified and begun to implement 10 early safety actions. Today, we are beginning installation of new signage on the outside of all railcars to clearly identify emergency doors and release handles for first responders who may not be familiar with Metro evacuation procedures. Metro train operators have been given independent authority to operate the air intake systems on their railcars, and the protocols for employees at our rail control center have been streamlined to prevent unnecessary distractions.

As another early action, Metro's Office of Emergency Management has created an enhanced schedule for full-scale emergency drills to be conducted over the next three years in all of the local jurisdictions. These drills will supplement our regular schedule of trainings, which already includes at least one full-scale drill a year. These drills bring multiple jurisdictions and law-enforcement agencies together to test response capabilities, build coordination and provide an opportunity to practice unified command in a real-life setting – and we believe that these additional drills can only further benefit the region.

When you consider the full range of Metro emergency training, we provided instruction to nearly 5,500 individuals last year – including jurisdictional first responders, Metro employees, and federal and military partners. Much of this training takes place at our one-of-a-kind Emergency Response Training Facility in Landover, Md. The facility includes a 260-foot, mock subway tunnel that provides a realistic environment for fire, police and emergency rescue services to train and hone their skills in a controlled environment.

Metro is also working with the fire chiefs from all of the local jurisdictions, through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (COG) to establish formal radio testing and reporting protocol within the Metro system. Each jurisdiction has its own radio system operating inside Metrorail tunnels, independent of the system used by Metro employees. And while the jurisdictions are responsible for their own testing, there have historically been no formalized testing schedules or reporting requirements. We are actively working to address those shortcomings.

As many of you know, Metro is often referred to as “America’s Subway” – providing transit service for residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, as well as visitors from across America and around the world who depend on the system when they come to the Nation’s Capital. The safety of these passengers, and Metro’s nearly 13,000 employees, is our top priority.

Like the majority of mass transit systems in the United States, Metrorail is an “open” system, which creates unique challenges and requires security strategies that are complex and multi-layered. The federal government provides significant funding for these efforts – Metro has invested nearly \$172 million of federal Homeland Security funding into the system since September 11, 2001.

This funding has helped us install more than 3,500 new cameras throughout Metro’s rail and bus systems, including new cameras focused on the entrances at each of the 91 Metrorail stations. Our new 7000 Series railcars will come equipped with built-

in cameras, and all Metrobuses are now outfitted with closed-circuit television capabilities.

We have made great strides in the hardening of Metro infrastructure through physical security enhancements that include lighting, fencing, intrusion detection systems, and guard booths at all Metro rail and bus facilities.

Homeland Security funding has been used to establish Metro's Anti-Terrorism Team and strengthen the bomb squad and canine teams. Metro's bomb squad members receive specialized training and deploy advanced equipment – including robots and x-ray systems – to maintain the security of our system. In addition, Metro's Bomb Squad Commander trains other teams throughout the region and was a key player in developing national standards with the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators (IABTI).

In response to recommendations made by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) following 9/11, Metro used Homeland Security funds to help build new Rail and Bus Operations Control Centers with state-of-the art equipment for the command and control of our rail and bus operations, and created redundancy in these operations with back-up locations now available.

We have invested not only Homeland Security funds, but also Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIAA) and federal formula funding and matching grants to support a \$5 billion, multi-year capital program that is making long-deferred safety and state of good repair improvements to the system. This ranges from upgrades to our tracks, structures and signal systems, to the design of state-of-the-art railcars coming this year that will exceed the latest safety standards.

We have developed industry-leading safety programs, including an award-winning railroad worker training program, and the first Close Call program on a major transit property to encourage confidential reporting of safety hazards. We have also

begun implementing the first Fatigue Management System of any transit property, leading the industry in combining worker wellness programs and hours of service standards that we, at Metro, are establishing as a policy matter. Dedication and commitment to safety throughout the organization has resulted in the reduction of employee injuries for four straight years.

Metro has closed 25 of 29 recommendations stemming from the 2009 Fort Totten accident. We have closed every FTA safety recommendation, and received a favorable system safety review from FTA in 2012. We welcome them back this year and will actively participate with them in another such review.

Safety remains our number one priority – we have made great progress, but we must be diligent and focused every day on safety not only within Metro, but with our jurisdictional partners on whom we depend for emergency response.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be pleased to answer your questions.

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