



Maryland Department of Transportation
The Secretary's Office



August 26, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Following the tragic Metrorail Red Line collision on June 22, 2009, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the local jurisdictions it serves face a number of fundamental challenges. Among them is to rebuild and maintain the public's trust in this essential transportation system. We believe that one of the most important factors for rebuilding public trust is strong, independent, expert safety oversight. While the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) examines how best to address oversight at the federal level, we believe that, in the near term, expanded safety oversight at the regional level is both essential and achievable.

At the direction of Congress, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) created a state-managed oversight program for rail transit safety in 1997. That same year, the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia created the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC), by execution of a memorandum of understanding, to assure WMATA's compliance with the requirements developed by the TOC in accordance with the federal state safety oversight regulations (at 49 CFR Part 659).

However, effective safety oversight requires granting a state or regional agency not only oversight responsibility, but also the authority, expertise and resources to carry out that responsibility. We are taking steps to strengthen the TOC to improve safety oversight of the Metrorail system. Specifically, we are pursuing the following:

- Equip the TOC with independent Committee members, dedicated exclusively to this role, with demonstrated expertise in safe transit operations,
- Ensure that the TOC becomes a well-funded organization with full-time staff,

- Establish requirements regarding the sharing of information related to accident or incident investigations (similar to those that apply to investigations of the National Transportation Safety Board at 49 CFR 831.13).

The transportation departments of the District of Columbia, State of Maryland and Commonwealth of Virginia share with WMATA a strong desire to ensure that the WMATA Metrorail system maintains the highest possible level of safety for its riders and employees. We believe that a regional, safety-focused, independent body with adequate expertise, authority and resources can help us meet this important goal.

Sincerely,



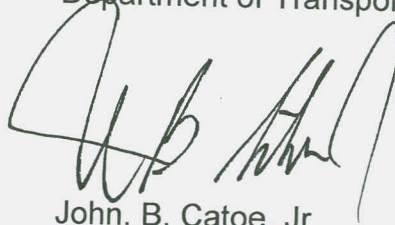
Gabe Klein
Director
District Department of Transportation



Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Acting Secretary, Maryland
Department of Transportation



Pierce R. Homer
Secretary of Transportation
Commonwealth of Virginia



John B. Catoe, Jr.
General Manager
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

CC: The Honorable Peter Rogoff
WMATA Board of Directors