

EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN

DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

Majority (202) 225-5051
Minority (202) 225-5074

Statement of Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
April 29, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Lynch, for holding this hearing.

The Metro system for the Washington area is a vital part of everyday life in the Nation's Capital. It provides an indispensable commuting option for hundreds of thousands of the area's workers and visitors each day.

I haven't been here very long, but I do understand that taxpayers from the entire country have been very generous in funding the Metro system. I'm advised that the ballpark figure for federal contribution to Metro since its inception is \$6.2 billion of the \$10 billion spent for the original 103-mile Metrorail system. Taxpayers from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland have also contributed heavily. And of course riders contribute through the farebox for each and every trip.

Yet Metro, to judge by news stories, seems to be experiencing a crisis of epic proportions. Its problems seem to be enormous and growing.

A news story I read from the Washington Post described comments from Metro riders as revealing "a band of beaten down and frustrated people who, despite their close kinship with Metro, have had about enough".

More riders squeezed onto Metro when gas prices rose and still more when the economy plunged. Metro is literally being mobbed and crammed with riders, while proposals to cut scores of bus routes are being met with strong rider opposition.

All too frequent off-loading of trains, derailments, and other mechanical problems are causing significant daily delays and dangerously crowded conditions.

And Metro has unique security issues which require a high level of training and concern.

Congress created Metro over 40 years ago.

A significant segment of the Federal work force relies on the system, making it an integral component of the government's ability to function.

Metro is also the main means of transportation for those attending events of national significance, such as the Presidential Inauguration, the annual 4th of July celebration, and the recent Cherry Blossom festival. Thus, Metro possesses a national significance.

The last Congress approved a measure which authorized \$1.5 billion in new federal funds for Metro. This money is to be used over 10 years for capital improvements and critical maintenance. The amendment required Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia to amend the Metro Compact in identical form. It also required identifying a combined \$1.5 billion in dedicated matching funds over 10 years to trigger the federal money.

It is my understanding that Virginia and Maryland have adopted the needed legislation and that the District of Columbia is expected to do shortly. If the 3 local jurisdictions are not in harmony on these matters Congress will not be able to release the federal funds. I hope that testimony today will clarify and help to maintain harmony among the three jurisdictions.

The legislation adopted last year also created an Inspector General for Metro, and increased the federal presence on the Metro Board by adding four federally appointed Directors to help ensure that the transportation needs of the federal government are adequately addressed. Metro is to be commended for appointing an IG pending the requirement going into effect.

I'm confident that this Subcommittee and Congress will continue to exercise management oversight. There is a great deal at stake in maintaining the investment the taxpayers have made in Metro.

I welcome all the witnesses at today's hearing, and look forward to their testimony.