

**Statement of the Honorable Tom Davis
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.**

**Hearing on Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail Accident
July 14, 2009**

Thank you Chairman Lynch for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to share a few observations regarding Metro. It's good to be back and to see old friends.

As former chairman of the District of Columbia Subcommittee, then as Chairman of the full committee, and then Ranking Member, I know full well the difficult challenges you face. I want to wish you all every success in dealing with the serious issues on your agenda.

I would like to begin by offering my condolences to the friends and families of the nine Metro passengers tragically lost in last month's crash. For the injured, I wish a speedy recovery.

Like the rest of us in the Metropolitan Washington region, I was saddened and disturbed by the news of the collision on the Red line. As a resident of this area, I know the important role Metro plays in our daily lives. I also appreciated the extent the region – and federal government – relies upon Metro to keep the wheels of government turning.

As you well know, this committee is charged with overseeing matters pertaining to the District of Columbia, the federal workforce, and the day-to-day operations of the federal government. The Washington Metro system plays a significant role in all of these issues – one could say a Metro line runs through the heart of this committee's jurisdiction. Thus, during my tenure on this committee, Metro's organizational, operational, and financial wellbeing was one of my top priorities.

The federal government and Congress played leading roles in the creation and construction of the Metro system. President Eisenhower first called for a plan for a rapid transit system to serve the needs of the federal

government; Congress authorized and appropriated funding to build the system.

Metro was intended to be a system fit for the capital of the free world – not as ornate as Moscow’s – but still, different from most others. For years, Metro has served its intended purpose well; however, years of operation and increased demand are clearly catching up with it.

Under former Metro general manager Dick White, Metro began to make the case that continued safe, reliable service would require a significant federal reinvestment to fund capital projects for both bus and rail. In addition, an important piece by Brookings fellow Robert Puentes highlighted the fact that the Washington Metro was unique among major transit systems in that it derived almost no funding from dedicated sources. Rather, it relied upon a hodge-podge of appropriations processes in the various jurisdictions of the WMATA compact. GAO studies also highlighted the lack of capital planning and its impact on system maintenance. The result was, and still is, a hat-in-hand approach that makes long-term capital investment difficult.

After a series of hearings, I first introduced HR3496, the National Capital Transportation Amendments, in 2005. This legislation passed the House in both the 109th and 110th Congresses. Finally, in 2008 it passed the Senate after having been included with the Rail Safety Act; it was signed into law in October of that year.

This legislation authorized \$1.5 billion for various capital improvements. Of this amount, the most pressing need was for the purchase of new rail cars.

It also shored up management of the system by creating an Inspector General position and putting on the Metro Board four federal representatives-two voting, two non-voting - to represent the interests of the federal government.

Metro has since created the office of Inspector General, and I commend General Manager John Catoe and the Metro Board for doing so.

The legislation required that Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia formally dedicate funding to the system before Metro receives the new federal funding. The local jurisdictions have now done so.

In view of the tragic accident which occurred on the Red Line last month, I believe the legislation we enacted is more important than ever and needs to be fully implemented.

I commend the members of the regional delegation for their efforts to highlight this continued need, and I call upon the Obama administration and the current Congress to follow-through. Now, more than ever, Metro needs their combined leadership.

I was disappointed neither the recently passed stimulus nor the FY10 budget included funding for the Metro authorization. Trains and buses must be replaced. Platforms are crumbling, and other facilities need immediate attention. The system needs the dollars we authorized

In addition, while the localities have approved legislation to amend the Metro Compact in accordance with the requirements of the \$1.5 billion authorization bill, Congress has yet to ratify these changes. I am grateful my friend and former colleague Mr. Hoyer has introduced legislation to accomplish this. It needs to be acted on as soon as possible.

In closing I will simply reiterate that Congress and the administration must continue the support for Metro that began so long ago. The federal government relies on Metro on a day-to-day basis as well as during emergencies. Emergency or not, the federal government and the Washington Region simply would not be able to function without Metro.

Fact is, Metro needs cash and they need it now. No amount of finger pointing or hand wringing can change that. The localities have stepped up to the plate. It's time for the administration and Congress to do the same.

Thank you.