

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEPHEN F. LYNCH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OVERSIGHT HEARING

“Moving Forward After the NTSB Report: Making Metro a Safety Leader”

Thursday, September 23, 2010, 2203 Rayburn House Office Building

Let me begin by welcoming our Ranking Member, Congressman Chaffetz, other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, today’s witnesses, and all those in attendance this afternoon. Today’s hearing has been called in order for the Subcommittee to once again receive an update on the steps the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is taking to ensure that its Metro rail, bus and para-transit services are operating at the highest possible levels of safety and reliability.

Today’s hearing, which marks the third Subcommittee hearing held on the Washington Metro in the 111th Congress, will also entail a lengthy discussion on the findings and recommendations contained in the National Transportation Safety Board’s recently issued Railroad Accident Report on the June 22, 2009 Red Line collision and the Washington Metro’s efforts to address the NTSB’s conclusions.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is the National Capital Area’s primary public transportation agency and provides services to a population of over 3.5 million people within a 1,500 square-mile area. Considering the estimated 40% of federal employees who utilize the Washington Metro on a daily basis and the hundreds of thousands of D.C. area residents and tourists who rely on the system to navigate the Nation’s Capital, it is critical that “*America’s Transit System*” be a pinnacle of dependability and safety.

Since the June 22, 2009 Redline collision, which left nine dead and 76 injured, serious questions have been raised by the Federal Transit Administration, the Tri-State Oversight Committee, and, most recently, the National Transportation Safety Board regarding deficiencies in the Washington Metro’s safety culture. Notably, the NTSB concludes that, “shortcomings in [the Washington Metro’s] internal communications, in its recognition of hazards, its assessment of risk from those hazards, and its implementation of corrective actions are all evidence of an ineffective safety culture within the organization.”

In light of these concerns, I am particularly interested in hearing about specific actions the Washington Metro has pursued over the past months to elevate and improve the organization’s safety record and performance. I also look forward to discussing ongoing efforts to strengthen and empower the Tri-State Oversight Committee, which serves as the Washington Metro’s State Safety Oversight Agency, in accordance with FTA regulations.

I understand that the Washington Metro is currently navigating a complex transition period, and while today’s hearing is aimed at addressing the transit system’s safety and reliability challenges, we cannot ignore the Washington Metro’s financial challenges, which, whether we like it or not, impact the organizations ability to achieve certain standards of safety. Additionally, I would like to note that the Federal government has a role to play in promoting the safety and service of the Washington Metro, and I welcome the opportunity to hear more about what we in Congress can do to help the Washington Metro at this time.

Again, I’d like to thank each of you for being with us this afternoon, and I look forward to your participation in today’s important hearing.