

**Opening Statement of  
Senator Susan M. Collins  
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

**“After the London Attacks: What Lessons Have Been Learned to Secure U.S.  
Transit Systems?”**

**September 21, 2005**

\*\*\*

This morning, the Committee will examine the security and preparedness levels of mass transit systems in the United States. I particularly appreciate the Chief Operating Officer of the London Underground traveling across the Atlantic to be with us this morning. He will share the lessons learned from his experience leading his agency’s response to the terrible July attacks in London. I would like to thank our distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Lieberman, for his initiative on this vitally important matter, and our other expert witnesses for their appearance here today.

On the morning of July 7<sup>th</sup>, terrorists exploded three bombs on underground trains in central London. A fourth bomb destroyed a double-decker bus. Fifty-two innocent people were murdered in those attacks. More than 700 were injured.

Exactly two weeks later, on July 21<sup>st</sup>, another attack was launched during London’s morning rush hour. Again, three trains and a bus were the targets. Fortunately, those bombs failed to detonate.

The attacks on London have been described as a “wake-up call” to those responsible for the safety and security of our own mass transit systems. And they are not the first. They echo the alarms set off by earlier attacks on mass transit in Madrid, Moscow, Tokyo, Tel Aviv, and so many other cities around the world. In fact, the National Counterterrorism Center database reveals that, in 2004, there were more than 150 deadly terrorist attacks on mass transit worldwide.

Now that we have heard the alarm bell, it is time to act.

In the jargon of counterterrorism, we often speak of “soft targets.” Soft targets are those locations and facilities that attract large numbers of people and that, by their very nature, must be open to easy public access, such as schools, shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, and sports arenas. The American mass transit system is among the softest of these targets.

Every year, according to the American Public Transportation Association, Americans take more than 9.6 billion trips on public transportation. Every weekday, approximately 6,000 public transit systems carry more than 14 million

passengers. This means that in less than a month's time, transit systems move more passengers than U.S. airlines transport in a year.

Implementing security measures for these necessarily open systems is both a challenge and a responsibility borne by federal, state, and local government officials as well as private sector owners and operators. Meeting this challenge requires a strategic vision and short- and long-term action plans, developed among those parties. And it requires the federal government's leadership.

I look forward to hearing today from the Department of Homeland Security as to the federal strategy for helping to secure our nation's mass transit systems. In particular, I question whether the Department may be focused too narrowly on aviation security to the detriment of other modes of transportation. While it is understandable that after the 9/11 attacks, air security would command our immediate focus, I believe it is time to reassess priorities and evaluate our preparedness across all modes of public transportation.

The answer, of course, is not merely to invest more in mass transit security, but to invest it wisely, to adopt and expand the strategies and tools that have proved successful elsewhere. From communications, surveillance equipment, sensors, and access control systems to planning, training, additional transit police and increased public awareness, the techniques by which mass transit security can be improved are known and in use. I welcome the testimony we will hear today on how these techniques can be employed to harden a target that remains far too soft.

###