



## **BUSH ADMINISTRATION STALLS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE MASS TRANSIT SECURITY**



*After attacks on Moscow's subway and Madrid's commuter rail system in 2004, concerns were raised about the safety of America's mass transit systems. The Bush Administration has largely ignored the need for improvement in the security of our mass transit, asking for only minimal funding. "Soft targets" in the U.S. are still highly at risk, but the Department of Homeland Security has failed to develop a promised national strategy to secure these targets. The recent attacks in London highlight the need for this Administration to take real action to keep us safe*

### **BUSH HAS NOT MADE RAIL SECURITY A PRIORITY**

#### **BUSH ADMINISTRATION UNDERFUNDING RAIL SECURITY**

**Bush Proposed Eliminating Funding For Rail And Transit Security Grants.** Bush's 2006 budget proposed eliminating dedicated funding for transit and rail security grants and replacing them with one \$600 million grant, forcing rail and transit systems to compete for funds with ports and other transportation sectors. Considering that public transportation security alone is estimated to cost some \$2 billion, the proposed \$600 million program will not meet the security needs of our transportation system. [Surface Transportation Report Homeland Security Committee Minority Staff, accessed 2/28/05; Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2006, 2/7/05]

**DHS Inspector General Said TSA Not Doing Enough For Non-Aviation Transportation Security; 90 Percent Of Funds Go To Aviation.** The DHS Inspector General reported to the House Homeland Security Committee in April 2005, "DHS faces significant challenges in ensuring the security of the nation's transportation systems. the 9/11 Commission reported that over 90% of the nation's \$5.3 billion annual investment in TSA goes to aviation, and that current efforts do not reflect a forward-looking strategic plan systematically analyzing assets, risks, costs, and benefits so that transportation security resources can be allocated where the risks are greatest in a cost effective way." [DHS Inspector General, House Homeland Security Cmte, 4/20/05]

**While Terrorist Attacks Were Increasing Worldwide, Bush And Republicans Proposed To Cut America's Homeland Security Funding.** On the very day that terrorists attacked the rail system in Madrid, killing 200 and injuring more than 1,000 people, congressional Republicans delivered a budget that proposed to cut \$155 million in homeland security spending next year, and \$857 million over the next five years from the president's own budget request. In addition, a 2006 budget memo revealed that Bush sought to cut DHS funding by \$1 billion. [Editorial, Sun Sentinel, 4/05/04; Washington Post, 5/27/04]

**In 2001, Bush Administration Said Rail Security Was "Beyond Immediate Security And Safety Needs."** The Bush Administration opposed a 2001 bill that would have created a \$1.77 billion security program for the nation's passenger and cargo railways. The bill would have provided for surveillance equipment and hiring and training police and bomb sniffing dogs. The Federal Railroad Administration head, Alan Rutter, testified to the Senate Commerce Committee that he opposed the rail security bill, saying "following Sept. 11, many (bills) are also being proposed that go far beyond immediate security and safety needs." The bill died in the Senate after passing unanimously out of the committee. More than 90 percent of the Homeland Security budget is devoted to aviation, leaving other forms of transportation grossly underfunded. [The News Journal, 8/20/04; United Press International, 11/1/01, 10/17/01]

**Transit Security Initiatives Faced A \$1.3 Billion Rail Security Funding Shortfall.** The American Transportation Agency estimates that the actual need for timely rail security improvements was \$3 billion, nearly twice the \$1.7 billion that was actually given to rail transit agencies to shore up security. [American Public Transportation Association, 3/24/03; 4/04]

**Senate Committee Passed \$1 Billion Rail Security Bill; Similar 2001 Bill Failed After Bush Opposition.** In April 2004, the Senate Commerce Committee passed a bill calling for DHS to come up with a rail security plan within 180 days of passage and authorized \$1 billion in funding. The committee passed a similar bill in October 2001, but the Bush administration opposed the bill and it subsequently died in the Senate. [AP, 4/8/04]

## DHS LATE WITH TRANSPORTATION SECURITY PLAN

**DHS Was Directed In 2004 To Create A National Strategy For Transportation Security.** The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act passed in December 2004 to fulfill the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission directed DHS to create a national strategy for transportation security. The plan should include risk-based priorities, protection, and funding recommendations for rail and mass transit. This plan was due to Congress on April 1, 2005. [CRS Report, 5/26/05]

**DHS Asked For A 2-3 Month Extension, Which Has Also Passed.** According to Homeland Security Committee Democratic Staff, DHS Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson sent a letter on April 5, 2005 to Representative Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, stating that the plan would be ready in 2-3 months. That deadline has passed and the plan has still not been provided to Congress. [House Committee on Homeland Security, Democratic Staff, 7/7/05]

## RAIL TRANSPORTATION IDEAL TERRORIST TARGET

**Congressional Research Service (CRS): Fully One Third Of Terrorist Attacks Worldwide Target Transportation Systems.** According to CRS, fully one third of terrorist attacks worldwide target major transportation systems and are the most frequent target of terrorist attacks. The House Homeland Security Committee reports that a “failure to invest in the security of passenger rail and public transit could result in serious casualties and leave the critical transportation systems upon which millions of American’s rely.” [Democrats on House Select Committee On Homeland Security; *America At Risk*, 1/04]

**Over Nine Billion Passenger Trips Are Taken On U.S. Mass Transit Each Year.** There are over 140 thousand miles of train routes in the United States, 22,000 of which are used by Amtrak and run through 46 states. Commuter rail operations service at least 1.2 million passenger trips each day. In total, more than 9 billion passenger trips are taken on U.S. mass transit systems every year. [House Select Committee On Homeland Security, [www.house.gov/hsc](http://www.house.gov/hsc); American Public Transportation Association, 3/24/03; TIME, 3/22/04]

- **Five Times As Many Americans Travel On Rail Transit Each Day In Comparison To The Number Of Airline Travelers.** Five times as many Americans travel on public or private mass transit each day in comparison to those who travel on planes, yet the federal government is spending \$4.5 billion on airline security in 2004, but only \$65 million on a limited rail security effort. [TIME, 3/22/04]

## OFFICIALS WARNED OF LOW LEVEL OF SECURITY AFTER MADRID ATTACKS

**Bulletin To Local Transit Authorities Warned Of U.S. Rail Vulnerabilities After Madrid.** "We acknowledge the U.S. rail sector has vulnerabilities which terrorists may choose to exploit," said a confidential bulletin, sent to local law enforcement officials and transit authorities. "Trains and rail stations remain potential targets for terrorist groups due to their reduced security (in comparison to airports)." [Washington Post, 3/13/04]

**Amtrak: In First Few Months After Madrid Attacks Threatening "Incidents" Occurred About "Once Or Twice A Week."** A threatening note found taped to a mirror on an Amtrak train headed to New York on July 19, 2004 was enough to halt a train in Newark while a dog team, police, and FBI agents swarmed through the cars. Passengers were asked to produce identification. Videos were shot. And baggage compartments were checked. Nothing was found. However, Amtrak spokesman Dan Stessel said "Since Madrid, we have been seeing incidents like this once or twice a week. Not necessarily a note, but something, a suspicious passenger, a bag left unattended." Such occurrences may become more common, especially during the election season, he said. [Richmond Times Dispatch, 7/23/04]

**Homeland Security Long Aware Of Al-Qaida's High Level Of Interest In Mass Transit.** Homeland security and officials said they have no specific intelligence indicating terrorists are planning a similar attack in the United States. But in Jan. 2004, the FBI issued a bulletin describing "a continued terrorist interest" in striking American rail systems. Such an attack, the FBI bulletin said, "could cause substantial loss of life" and have an "impact on public confidence resulting in massive economic loss." U.S. forces in Afghanistan found al-Qaida photographs of U.S. railroad engines, cars and crossings. Al-Qaida prisoners have told interrogators that terrorists might try to take out bridges, remove sections of track or damage train engines to cause derailments. "We do know that al-Qaida looks to hit us, hit us hard, and that mass transit is something they've consistently referenced." said Asa Hutchinson, border and transportation security chief at the Homeland Security Department. [Associated Press, 3/13/04]

**Mass Transit Not Easily Secured, And Preferred Target For Terrorists.** "If terrorists want to kill a lot of people, public transportation is always the preferred target, because you get a lot of people in the same place at the same time," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism analyst at the Rand Corp. Securing bus, train and light rail systems is far more difficult than airports because passengers do not pass through metal detectors and their backpacks, satchels and purses are not X-rayed to detect weapons or potential explosives. "We're all vulnerable, there's no getting around that," said Mike Healy, BART public affairs director. [Los Angeles Times, 3/13/04]

## DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO CALL FOR INCREASED TRANSIT SECURITY

**Democrats Called On DHS To Complete Overdue Reports In March 2005.** Democrats have pushed DHS to complete more than 100 overdue reports and plans to Congress, including the transportation security report, and will continue doing so. Until a national transportation security plan is in place, rail, public transit, and other transportation areas will remain at risk. [Press Release, Reps. Thompson and Meek, 3/10/05]

**Democrats in Congress Proposed Legislation to Strengthen Mass Transit Security.** Democrats proposed to create a three-year \$2.8 billion grant program to help increase surveillance on mass transit, improve command, control, and communications systems, provide capital improvements to better protect citizens in the event of an attack, and enhance training for emergency response personnel. [House Homeland Security Committee, Democratic Staff 7/7/05]