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House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure DEMOCRATS

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T&I Dems to Introduce Rail Security Bill *PROTECTS Act authorizes \$1.3b to protect rail lines, workers, passengers and communities*

WASHINGTON—Senior Democrats on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today will introduce a bill to improve security for passenger and freight railroads, their employees, and the communities they serve.

Reps. James Oberstar (Minn.), Corrine Brown (Fla.) and Elijah E. Cummings (Md.) will introduce the Protecting Railroad Operators, Travelers, Employees, and Communities with Transportation Security Act of 2004 (*PROTECTS Act*). The bill authorizes nearly \$1.3 billion to provide better railroad security and response to terrorist attacks.

“With ever-increasing threats, our nation’s rail system is at great risk. Accordingly, the federal government needs a permanent rail security plan that assures the safety and security of all rail passengers,” said Oberstar, Ranking Democratic Member on the full T&I Committee. “The federal government is spending \$4.4 billion this year on aviation security, but it’s spending only \$65 million on rail security, even though five times as many people take trains as planes every day.”

The bill authorizes \$500 million to be appropriated for freight and passenger rail security improvements, a total of \$597 million for Amtrak’s fire and life-safety improvements, \$65 million for system-wide Amtrak security upgrades, and a total of \$100 million for rail research and development. It also provides for improved training and equipment for railroad employees and local emergency personnel to better respond to terrorist incidents.

The March, 2004, bombing of commuter trains in Madrid, Spain, and other terrorist threats to rail transportation prompted the T&I Democrats to introduce this legislation

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"Increased funding for rail security is something this country desperately needs. In fact, I believe we need a comprehensive rail security bill, particularly in light of the terrible metro rail tragedy in Madrid," said Brown, ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Railroads. "It is finally time we dedicate our resources to providing rail security for our nation's citizens, and desist from focusing almost exclusively on security for the airlines."

"A documented one-third of all terrorist attacks worldwide have targeted railroads and other surface transportation systems. Most recently, this vulnerability was demonstrated in the terrorist attack against Madrid's commuter train system. The Madrid tragedy signaled an urgent need to put a stronger rail security plan in place in this country," Cummings said. "This bill takes a major step toward better securing millions of Americans and tons of freight that pass over the nation's 220,000 miles of tracks daily."

Cummings, a Member of the Subcommittee on Railroads, led the release of a General Accounting Office report entitled *Rail Safety and Security: Some Actions Already Taken to Enhance Rail Security, but Risk-based Plan is Needed* in May, 2003, that detailed several security risks on the nation's rails. The report was initiated as a result of a July, 2001, freight rail accident in the Howard Street tunnel in Cummings' hometown of Baltimore, Maryland.

The attack in Madrid killed 191 people and injured more than 1,800 others, making it the deadliest terrorist action against European civilians since 1988. The attack consisted of a series of ten explosions that occurred onboard four commuter trains.

America's rail transportation network has also been targeted. Last May, a truck driver from Ohio pleaded guilty to providing material support to al-Qaeda, and told investigators that the organization wanted to derail a train near Washington, D.C. Other intelligence sources report that terrorists have targeted the Washington rail corridor and that some had discussed exploding a train near storage tanks containing hazardous chemicals. Also, on July 16, a Seattle man traveling aboard a cross-country Amtrak train was charged with telephoning bomb threats against the train as it passed through Wisconsin a few days earlier.

Senior T&I Members William Lipinski (Ill.) and Peter DeFazio (Ore.), and Rep. Martin Meehan (Mass.) are original cosponsors of the bill.

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