

March 27, 2007: Rail and Public Transportation Security Act

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ACT OF 2007

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Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1401, The Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007, of which I am an original cosponsor. This legislation will make long overdue security improvements to the rail, transit, and surface transportation systems in our nation.

In the last 80 years there have been over 900 attacks on public transportation systems around the world. In recent history, the horrific attacks in Madrid, London, and Mumbai have been unfortunate reminders that we must do more to secure our Nation's transportation systems. For too long, our country has not done enough to improve the security of our transportation systems. In fact President Bush's fiscal year 2007 budget proposal included \$41.4 million in the Transportation Security Administration budget for surface transportation security, less than 1 percent of the TSA budget. Clearly the past level of funding has been inadequate to address the security of the surface transportation system. I am very pleased that H.R. 1401 authorizes three grant programs that will make more funds available to enhance the security of rail, public transportation and over-the-road systems.

The Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007 requires rail and public transportation systems to submit vulnerability assessments and security plans to the Department of Homeland Security. Each system is then placed into a risk tier, those in medium and high risk tiers have to have Department of Homeland Security approval for their security plans. Each transportation system will then employ security measures to address the type and degree of risk they face. This approach will help increase the security of our transportation systems, while allowing them the flexibility to adopt measures that meet their needs.

I am particularly pleased that the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007 requires that rail and public transportation systems provide their employees with adequate training. This training requirement will enable employees to respond efficiently to prevent potential terrorist attacks and to minimize the damage and loss of life if an attack does occur. I am also pleased that this legislation establishes a rail and public transportation security exercise program so that systems can practice and perfect their responses to potential attacks.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.