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Testifying before the House Homeland Security subcommittee were, from left, Police Chief Polly Hanson of the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority; William Morange, director of security, New York City MTA; LACMTA's Paul Lennon; and Christopher Kozub, associate director, National Transit Institute.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Tom Yedinak, APTA

Metro has 'Robust Training Program,' Lennon Tells Congress

- Training for first responders, employees focused on anti-terrorism

(July 27, 2005) Metro has a "robust training program" that often involves as many as 30 local first-responder agencies and is focused on anti-terrorism, a House Homeland Security subcommittee was told, Tuesday, during a hearing in Washington, D.C.

"The key part of our agency's training program focuses on preparing to respond and preparing to prevent," said Paul Lennon, Metro's director of Intelligence and Emergency Preparedness Management, in testimony before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science and Technology.

"These exercises anticipate responses to...terrorists, weapons of mass destruction, explosives and combinations thereof," Lennon said. "The 'real world'...simulations we conduct are tests of each agency's first-response personnel and their training...."

Lennon testified at the hearing alongside officials from the Federal Transit Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and transit security officials from Washington and New York City.

Members of the 18-member subcommittee include U.S. Reps. Jane Harmon (D-36th, El Segundo) and Loretta Sanchez (D-47th, Garden Grove).

Plan needed 'quickly'

Subcommittee Chairman Peter King (R-N.Y.), commenting about the need for a national transit security plan, said, "We all agree that it is long overdue and we need it as quickly as possible."

David Kim, Metro's director of Federal Advocacy, attended the hearing and said Lennon and the other transit security officials "were very clear about what they're doing, what they need to do and what the federal government needs to do."

He said their testimony "underscored the important role the federal government has in not just providing money, but also in providing standards and guidance."

9,000 employees trained

Lennon noted that more than 9,000 Metro employees have attended an anti-terrorism training course that "encompasses the who, what, why, where and how of dealing with unattended packages and suspicious behavior."

"We are very cognizant of the critical role our employees play," he said. "They are our 'eyes, ears and voice' in our nation's war against terrorism."

Lennon called the emergency exercises, employee training, and public awareness programs a "proper investment" and said such training will "give us the capability to initiate an immediate and forceful response. That response is in place today on our expansive rail and bus network...."

He said the "training and know-how" gives Metro employees and security personnel "the confidence to assure the general public that all possible measures are being undertaken to protect our welfare."