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U.S. Representative Jane Harman and staff review new security system for the Metro Orange Line at Bus Operations Control with, from left, Paul Lennon, Metro Director of Intelligence and Emergency Procedure Management; Transit Police Chief Capt. Dan Finkelstein; Metro CEO Roger Snoble, and Metro Orange Line project manager Roger Dames, DEO, Project Management.



PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON

Metro Asks Rep. Harman to Seek Federal Funds for Security

- 'Goal is to prevent, disrupt terrorist acts,' Harman says

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 17, 2005) CEO Roger Snoble and Metro security officials asked Congresswoman Jane Harman (D-Venice), Tuesday, for support in seeking federal funding that can be used exclusively for transit security nationwide.

Paul Lennon, Metro's director of Intelligence and Emergency Preparedness Management, noted that transit security funding normally is folded into federal funds earmarked for such first responders as police and fire departments.

"Transit is not seen by the states, which disseminate these grant funds, as a traditional first response entity," Lennon said. "Transit will not be able share in these grant monies under such a formula strategy."

"We do recognize and acknowledge the critical needs of the first response communities to be able to respond decisively and effectively..." he added, "but Metro, as the primary public transport provider in L.A. County, needs to proactively 'prevent' situations before

they occur.”

“The goal is to prevent and disrupt (terrorist acts), not just to respond,” said Harman, a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, the committee that authorizes security funding.

Metro Orange Line project manager Roger Dames explains CCTV display panel that relays live images from Metro Orange Line stations.



Federal funding needed

“To effectively harden ourselves...from being selected as a terrorist's target, we need additional federal grant funding in a dedicated-to-transit form,” Lennon said, noting that transit should not compete with first-responders for funding.

Snoble said the Board has been “extremely supportive and has wanted us to explore every avenue (to improve security).” He also noted that security is one of the major items, along with fuel and employee healthcare benefits, in the agency's budget.

Lennon's told Harman his “wish list” for Metro security improvements included – among a number of items – more security technology, more handlers for the police dogs now on order, and funds to combine the Rail Operations Center and the Bus Operations Center into one facility “focused on interoperations” of Metro and the county's 17 municipal transit operators.

Following the briefing, Harman visited the Bus Operations Center to view live security camera video already being received from Metro Orange Line stations.



From left, LASD Lt. Pat Jordan; Transit Police Chief Capt. Dan Finkelstein; CEO Roger Snoble; Rep. Harman; Sheriff's Deputy Susan Vodrazka, with K-9 Deputy Hero; Paul Lennon, Director of Intelligence and Emergency Procedure Management, and LASD Lt. Leo Norton

Protecting L.A. transportation

"I came here knowing that very good men and women do everything they can to protect transportation in Los Angeles," Harman said following the briefing. "The federal government provides about \$150 million out of about a \$3 billion annual budget (for transit security), and that's pathetic."

Metro officials had held a similar briefing, recently, for Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Los Angeles). She is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, the subcommittee that provides funds for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"The good news here in Los Angeles is that there are cameras, dogs and very strategic systems thinkers on the job," Harman said. "I hope that I can return to Washington and get more money spent here. That's what we really need."