

Domestic terrorism is one of the most fundamental threats to the liveability of our community. I have greatly enjoyed working with the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. Fowler) and the leadership of our committee on the Preparedness Against Terrorism Act. It is providing important coordination as has been detailed by the preceding speakers, and I want to add my strong support and am proud to be a cosponsor.

But I would like to focus, if I could, for just 2 minutes on one particular aspect that I appreciate the subcommittee adding into the effort and that deals with the critical area of transportation. Providing safe and accessible transportation choices for all members of the community is a critical role for the functioning of that community. There are 350,000 Americans who work every day in providing public transportation services that allow our communities to work. And there are more than 6 million Americans a day who ride transportation services to work, to school, and to other functions in their community. Ensuring their safety from acts of terrorism is a critical step toward the larger goal of providing a safe working environment and safe transportation.

The Preparedness Against Terrorism Act adds an important launching point toward meeting this goal. It includes critical provisions for the first time in Federal statute for studying the threats from terrorism on our Nation's transportation systems and strategies for improving our ability to prepare, prevent, and respond to these potential attacks.

We had demonstrated and our colleague from Georgia mentioned a few moments ago the release of the poisonous gas in 1995 on the Japanese subway system. We saw how it faced the unique and increasing potential threat from terrorist attack given the difficulty in monitoring, identifying and responding to threats of this nature.

When accidents or crime occur on buses or rail, they often capture the news headlines. Despite the high profile given to such instances, transit, of course, remains one of the safest modes of transportation; but sometimes you would not know that through the headlines.

Sadly, in recent years there have been a series of events across the country. In Washington, D.C., and California, Wisconsin and Texas, bus drivers have been attacked, threatened and injured. In several instances passengers as well have been injured as a result of these attacks. When these types of tragedies occur, we have real problems in terms of making sure that

people use the system. For the thousands of men and women who work as bus drivers, rail or ferry operators, we need to highlight the important job they perform and recognize the responsibility they take on with each passenger they carry.

I appreciate the provisions in this bill that have the director develop in its annual preparedness plan and risk assessment looking at what happens for transportation. But I hope that this will serve as a springboard for our doing a better job for the entire transportation system to deal with the needs of passengers and transportation workers.

I have enjoyed working with the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. Fowler) and the transit union to include these provisions in the bill, but I hope this tip of the iceberg is something we can work on in our committee to extend these provisions because every day Americans deserve maximum safety and security when they use the transportation systems. I appreciate the work here, and I hope we will be able to follow up on it.