Testimony of Jim Graham
Chairman of the Board of Directors of the
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
before the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service,
and the District of Columbia
of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
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Good morning Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Chaffetz, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Jim Graham, and I appear before you today in my role as the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, or WMATA.

I have served on WMATA's Board since 1999 and first served as Board Chairman in 2003. It is exciting to be chairman again at this point in WMATA's history, when we are enjoying tremendous success in a number of areas while, at the same time, working through some difficult challenges.

As you may know, the WMATA Board has two voting members each from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, plus six alternates, also equally divided among the jurisdictions. I am privileged to represent the District of Columbia on the Board, and would like to begin by saying a few words about what WMATA means for the District and the entire National Capital Region.

First let me note that WMATA provides three essential transit services, collectively referred to as the "Metro system." Both the bus and rail systems--Metrobus and Metrorail--are accessible to persons with disabilities, but for those whose disabilities preclude them from using those "fixed route" services, we also prove MetroAccess paratransit service.

First and foremost, Metro means mobility. Metrorail and Metrobus serve a population of over 3.5 million within a 1,500 square-mile area, and average weekday passenger trips on the two systems total nearly 1.3 million. MetroAccess provides 4,970 passenger trips on an average weekday. No neighborhood or community within the District of Columbia is more than two blocks from Metrobus services.

Without Metro, this region would come to a halt, mired in congestion and gridlock. Metro takes 500,000 cars off the road each weekday and eliminates the need for 1,400 highway lane miles. Without Metro, Washington, D.C. would need an additional 160,000 parking spaces beyond those that currently exist.

Metro also stimulates regional economic development and is a linchpin in the region's $359 billion economy. The District of Columbia Office of Planning estimates development value within 10 minutes walk of Metrorail stations in the District at $37 billion. Joint development projects at Metrorail stations contribute significantly to the

region's economy. Metrorail has stimulated development at most stations in the Downtown core and at a number of locations in Maryland and Virginia, as well.

Metro is essential not only to the efficient functioning of this region, but to the daily operations of the federal government, as well. The Metro system was built at the request of the federal government, and it continues to serve the federal government, day-in and day-out. For example, half of all Metrorail stations are located at federal facilities. More than 120,000 federal employees ride Metro to work daily, and federal workers comprise 40% of peak ridership. It is significant that almost ten percent of Metrorail ridership boards at stations that serve Congress and the Pentagon.

In addition, the federal government relies on Metro for daily transportation of visitors to the capital and for national events such as presidential inaugurations, state funerals, celebrations and festivals on or near the National Mall. Metro at times adjusts service and extends operating hours to accommodate increased passenger loads due to federal events and public demonstrations. Upon request, Metrobuses serve as security perimeters for special events on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol and at other public places.

Metro is a critical component for ensuring continuity of federal government operations during an emergency. Federal recovery plans rely heavily on Metro, which played a key role on September 11th.

The most recent example of Metro's service to the Nation's Capital occurred during the 2009 Inauguration weekend. On Inauguration Day, Metro moved more than 1.5 million people: 1.1 million traveled by rail and about 423,000 traveled by Metrobus.

As Chairman of WMATA, my focus is going to continue to be on ensuring that we are doing all we can to enhance efficiency, improve our service, and get the best possible "bang for our buck," so that we may continue to provide the kind of service that the federal government depends upon.

We are ready to enter into a renewed partnership with the federal government, as envisioned in legislation passed last year, which contained a $1.5 billion authorization for WMATA. The local jurisdictions are taking the steps necessary to meet the requirements of that legislation, and I look forward to working with this committee and our regional Congressional delegation to ensure that the federal government keeps its side of the bargain, as well.

The regional delegation has written to the President urging him to include $150 million for Metro in his FY2010 budget request. We are requesting the same amount from the Congressional appropriations committees, as well.

With additional federal funding, WMATA can make the capital improvements needed for improved service to the federal government and the region. WMATA needs new buses that are more reliable and energy efficient as well as new railcars. We need

to make sure our escalators work more consistently. All these investments will not only help us provide more efficient transportation, they will help us save money on a day-to-day basis.

Our General Manager, John Catoe, will discuss some of the current issues at Metro related to our financial situation, safety and security initiatives, and future capital needs. I want to thank the members of this Subcommittee, the full Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Congress for your support of Metro.