

**STATEMENT FOR SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
SECURITY HEARING**
Senator Olympia J. Snowe
October 2001

I thank the Chair for scheduling this hearing on what has become a national imperative in the wake of September 11. When the “devil incarnate” hit the U.S., he attacked not only America, but freedom-loving nations everywhere, and we are going to need the resources of the U.S. coupled with the cooperation of our global neighbors in order to wage and *win* our fight against terrorism.

As a component of that fight, we are here today because we know that our transportation system must endure and must be *secure* if we are to move America forward. As we all know, the Commerce Committee recently held a hearing to examine what went wrong and where we go from here with respect to aviation security, and today we focus on the vital issue of surface transportation security.

Because we have to assume that any facet of our transportation system remains a target and a vehicle, so to speak, for violence. So we have to take steps to move toward a more secure system in *every* mode of transportation and *across* our transportation infrastructure, so that we can keep Americans safe, carry on the business of the Nation and ensure our continued economic viability so that we are in a position of *strength* to be able to wage this war. The bottom line is, we cannot remain strong if we cannot remain *mobile*.

We have to keep our ports safe so goods can be delivered...we have to

protect our highway infrastructure so parts can be supplied...we have to secure our airliners and railways so that people can move about as freely as possible. And we can only achieve this with a comprehensive, exhaustive approach that recognizes that the entire system is only as strong as its weakest link.

For instance, when I was in my home state of Maine after the attacks, I met with the Portland Transportation Director and the Portland International Jetport Director and they expressed concern about security coordination among different modes of transportation. I think this is an important emerging issue as we craft federal policy in response to the attacks of the 11th.

I learned that differing standards of safety and security were used by federal transportation officials in different cities after the attack. And not only that, but in the absence of adequate guidance from higher level authorities, federal officials at the local level were forced to do their best to respond to the potential threats on their own. Nor were officials of the various federal departments within a city communicating with one another or sharing information.

Clearly, we've got to do better than that. It's an absolute imperative that officials who oversee aviation, maritime and port security, rail, highways, bridges, tunnels, pipelines, and other transportation infrastructure, as well as INS or Customs and law enforcement, be coordinated and communicate during emergencies. *This* is the message I heard back home, and I couldn't agree more.

This isn't about pointing fingers. In fact, I think our government responded

well considering these horrific attacks were made under the cowardly cloak of surprise. As Chair of the Senate Subcommittee that oversees the Coast Guard, I was especially impressed by their response. Heightened security measures were put in place immediately. The Coast Guard shut down the port of New York and secured the harbor and other heightened security measures were taken nationwide. In Maine, all vessels were being escorted into port.

The fact of the matter is, we have been tragically propelled into a *new era*. So this hearing is about what we do *now*, knowing what we know and looking at what went wrong so we can plug the holes for the *future*. And part of that has *got* to be doing a better job of coordinating and consolidating both the gathering and dissemination of information.

So I've introduced legislation to give the Department of Transportation the authority and tools they need to safeguard our national transportation infrastructure in the event of a national emergency. Specifically, it will centralize within DOT the authority to coordinate national transportation and transportation-related activities of all federal agencies during emergencies. It will require the dissemination of critical transportation-related information. And it will call for the development of uniform emergency transportation security standards that will be shared with the appropriate federal, state and local authorities.

We need to explore ways in which we can reach down to the state and local levels to ensure that communication flows and intelligence is shared, that procedures are standardized and responders are trained and properly equipped. To

this end, my legislation will create a Federal Emergency Transportation Administration, or “FETA”, which would use a “FEMA”-type model within DOT to address national transportation emergencies.

FETA would be responsible for coordinating domestic transportation during a national emergency – including aviation, maritime and port security, and surface transportation. It would coordinate transportation-related responsibilities of other agencies – such as INS or Customs – during an emergency as well. Finally, it could serve as a point of contact within U.S. DOT for the Office of Homeland Security laid out by the President.

In addition, FETA would be responsible for establishing uniform national transportation “emergency” standards, and notifying appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and governments about transportation-related security threats in the event of an emergency. And it would also develop appropriate standard operating procedures for agencies and municipalities to follow during an emergency and disseminate critical transportation-related information.

Mr. Chairman, clearly the events of September 11 are much more than a wake-up call – they are an alarm bell that continues to sound throughout the nation. We have an incredible amount of collective talent and experience in this country, and I hope that it can all be *brought together* to effect the kind of changes we need to fix the deficiencies brought tragically home by last week’s attacks. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.