**CONFIDENTIAL Issue Brief**

COG-WMATA Coordination

**Background**

Subsequent to the January 12, 2015 L’Enfant Plaza event, Senators Warner and Mikulski sent letters COG-WMATA requesting a coordinated regional effort to address emergency response communication and training concerns. Senator Warner’s letter focused on radio communication and cell phone connections, while Senator Mikulski requested a regional effort to improve training for response to Metrorail emergencies. Beginning in February, the COG Fire Chiefs Committee, WMATA and COG staff engaged in coordinating and facilitating the regional response to these requests.

**Metrorail System Communications**

*Radio testing; 9-1-1 Report; communications study*

In February, the COG 9-1-1 Directors Committee, in cooperation with WMATA, conducted cell phone 9-1-1 testing throughout the underground portion of Metrorail. More than 400 calls were placed to 9-1-1 on the four primary cell phone service carriers. Results indicate 90% of cell 9-1-1 calls are successful in stations and 28% of calls placed in tunnels are completed. WMATA’s Neutral Host project designed to greatly increase cell phone capability

*Response to Senator Warner: Radio Testing and Protocol*

A report was generated assessing radio system challenges, documenting radio use during responses and outlining deployment protocols. The report also quantified the current performance level of radio communication system at 89% reliability. The new protocol was presented and includes following elements:

**Frequency:** 5 jurisdictions testing on biweekly basis; DC testing on weekly basis; WMATA instituted independent testing;

**Procedure:** Standardized process for testing/reporting across region;

**Reporting:** New web-based reporting system;

**Corrective Actions:** Outage reporting to all parties to insure situational awareness.

The response was submitted to Senator Warner’s office March 19, 2015. Metrorail and the jurisdictions are implementing the new protocol throughout the system.

*Additional Communication Actions*

A study was commissioned to identify interim solutions to improve radio communications to comply with the public safety grade communications standard until WMATA completes implementation of their new radio communications system targeted for 2021. The scope includes cell phone connectivity, options for improvement, and a view of WMATA/Public Safety Agency interoperable communications policies and procedures. The project advisory committee is comprised of representatives of COG public safety committees, the Fire Chiefs Committee and WMATA. In addition, UASI funding was procured to secure and deploy additional communication equipment (tactical BDAs) to all jurisdictions served by Metrorail.

**First Responder and WMATA Emergency Response Training**

*Response to Senator Mikulski: First Responder Training Plan*

The Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee, COG staff and WMATA are drafting the Metrorail emergency response to Senator Mikulski. As outlined in the work plan, the response will:

**Review** current jurisdictional and WMATA training practices;

**Identify** enhanced training using through assessment of best practices in other regions and national associations;

**Prepare** regional training plan as appendix to updated COG/WMATA Emergency Procedures / Policy Agreement.

Related additional actions to date include assembling a schedule of upcoming training and exercise opportunities, scheduling quarterly functional exercises. Funding was secured for online training and tracking platform to support regional efforts.

**Metro Rail Transit Fire/Rescue Emergency Procedures Policy Agreement**

Emergency response in the Metrorail system is outlined in the 2011 *Metro Rail Transit Fire/Rescue Emergency Procedures Policy Agreement*, maintained by COG Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee. The *Agreement* outlines common operating procedures and concepts used during Metro emergencies with COG Fire Chiefs and WMATA as the agreement signatories. The *Agreement* does not supplant individual governing procedures for WMATA or jurisdiction’s fire departments.

A review of current *Agreemen*t was conducted and the Fire Chiefs’ Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee and Communications Subcommittee are currently drafting additions to the agreement. Amendments will include the new radio testing protocol and new regional training plan as appendix. The revised *Agreement* will require review and approval by the CAOs, the COG Board and WMATA Board.

**WMATA-Fire Chiefs Leadership Coordination**

The Fire Chiefs and WMATA leadership initiated monthly meetings to coordinate regional actions and discuss concerns and progress. Senior fire department and WMATA public safety staff reconstituted monthly Joint Leadership meetings to review incident and discuss actions to improved emergency response.

**Implications for the Region**

A safe, reliable Metrorail system is essential to the region economic success and quality of life. Continued actions are needed to ensure Metrorail meets the needs of the region.

**Questions/Discussion Framework**

What additional actions are needed to address Metrorail public safety concerns?

What is the role of public bodies (state and local governments) – staff and elected officials in advancing a safe and reliable Metrorail system?