



June 20, 2019
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Good morning, Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this important hearing and for inviting me here today to discuss the proposed twenty percent national reduction to the Amtrak Police Department. I am humbled and truly honored for this opportunity to speak on this important subject of great concern for the American public and its transportation infrastructure, most specifically the millions of Americans that ride on Amtrak trains every year, as well as the thousands of dedicated Amtrak employees, Indeed, I, as well as my fellow officers, believe this to be a matter that has the potential to substantially impact on our nation's security and safety..

My name is William Gonzalez, and I am the President of the Amtrak Police Labor Committee. The Labor Committee is the duly recognized union for the 400 plus brave and distinguished members of the Amtrak Police Department. The Amtrak Police Labor Committee is an organization of sworn law enforcement officers, elected to represent its members, which includes communication officers, better known to the public as dispatchers, as well as the security guards who, among other things, are responsible for securing Amtrak's rail yards.. We are the voice for the men and women who dedicate their lives to protect and serve Amtrak's passengers, employees and infrastructure, better known to us as the Amtrak community. We are committed to improving the working conditions for our officers, as well as the safety and security of those we serve. We strive to accomplish this through education, legislation, information, community involvement, employee representation and most importantly, good and practical law enforcement strategy and techniques. No one knows the dangers and the difficulties faced by today's Amtrak officers better than another law enforcement officer, and no one knows Amtrak's officers better than the Labor Committee.

The Amtrak Police Department is comprised of six divisions spread out across the country, New England, New York, Mid Atlantic North, Mid Atlantic South, Central, and Western.

Daily the men and women of the Amtrak Police manage to accomplish a lot with only very little, and usually with a smile. Policing in the Amtrak community is unique and incomparable to any other police force in these united states and perhaps even the world. We wear many hats of myriad shapes and sizes. Amtrak Police Officers sometimes act as customer service agents helping passengers with questions and concerns. Sometimes we are called upon to perform similarly to municipal and transit police, enforcing traffic laws, and making a multitude of arrests on and off trains, in rail yards and right of ways. Our officers respond to and investigate felony and misdemeanor crimes and handle fatalities on a frequent basis. Other times the Department acts as a force protection, comparable to departments like the US capitol police, FBI uniform and Secret Service Uniform, to mention a few. We have officers who serve on anti-terrorism teams, as well as others who serve on a multitude of Federal task force, including the FBI's joint terrorism task force and DEA task force, among others. We also have one of the nation's largest K9 divisions per capita, with a concentration on explosive detection and narcotic K9s. The Amtrak police truly accomplish what no other police force would be able to do. With our multi-jurisdictional commissions and vast knowledge of the railroad, our officers are able to keep Amtrak running on time and in a safe and efficient manner. As officers we consider our multi-faceted usefulness to be one of our most defining characteristics as a police department.

On May 1, 2019, The Amtrak Police Labor Committee (FOP) was informed by Chief Neil Trugman that CEO Richard Anderson wanted a 20% reduction of our police force. Chief Trugman explained that the 454 APD personnel which is a mix of officers and civilians needed to be reduced to 369, with no budget information given. The Department is currently authorized 460 sworn positions by Amtrak. This is already down from the 492 sworn positions in 2015, a 7% reduction. Today the Police Department is securing Amtrak with 424 assigned police officers not 454 that was relayed to us on May 1. From 2015 to 2022 the Amtrak Police Department will be down 25% under Richard Anderson's current plan. This is all driven by Richard Anderson's Project Zero initiative. He, along with other Amtrak officials, stands to collect large bonuses with the current cuts at Amtrak. With Amtrak receiving tax payer's dollars, the CEO stands to profit by risking the safety and security of the traveling public.



If cost-cutting were the legitimate concern of departmental management, why did it needlessly purchase brand new 9mm handguns this year when it had already purchased new .40 caliber handguns no more than three years ago. The department also wastefully purchased new body cameras for a police department that has only been required to use force on an average of 0.9% of arrests within the past four years, along with expensive, non-lethal weapons such as tasers that have only been used less than a handful of times. Those monies would have been much better spent on hiring more officers and repairing and updating our flawed and malfunctioning radio system, which would substantially facilitate inter-officer and departmental communications. Amtrak as a corporation has, simply put, been more concerned with appearances than practical law enforcement and the safety of its passengers.

The Police Department's vehicles were cut by 20% in 2018 limiting the ability of officers to respond to outlying stations and incidents on the railroad right of way. An example of how the vehicle cuts are affecting the police, on March 28, 2019 at Sunnyside NY an employee involved shooting occurred and the one officer assigned to work 192 acres was lucky enough to have been reporting early to work was able to respond quickly and take over the scene, but there were not enough vehicles for other officers to arrive from NY Penn Station which is 5.6 miles away and with New York City traffic the response time is 30-45 minutes. The officer required assistance from the NYPD, who are not familiar with the yard.

Some more recent facts, on March 20, 2019 Union Station in Chicago was without radio reception for five (5) hours, this issue has been ongoing for years. On April 13, 2019 the radio system in Chicago again failed for an hour and a half (1.5).

The narcotics issues on Amtrak trains has been an issue for years. On April 16, 2019, 18 pounds of FENTANYL were seized in New Mexico off an Amtrak train and May 20, 2019 in NY, APD and DEA seized 2 kilograms of Heroin and 2 kilograms of FENTANYL. These are just two example dates, Amtrak Police seize hundreds of pounds of narcotics monthly.

In 2015, former Amtrak Police Chief Polly Hanson commissioned an independent workforce study completed by Strategic Policy Partnership, LLC. During this period Amtrak Police Staffing levels were at 492 personnel. The summary of the one hundred and twenty one page report states, and I quote "it is also important to note that APD is currently lacking across all regions in actual strength, according to the analysis of the most recent figures available to the project team. This underscores the importance of streamlining hiring processes" end quote.

The study goes on to say, and I again quote "All divisions appear to be lacking sufficient staffing in either Police Officers or Sergeants presently, and the majority are lacking Sergeants in terms of authorized strength." end quote. Since this study was completed several years ago, ridership has increased, trains have been added to schedules and police staffing has nonetheless been reduced. That being said, and our nature as police officers for fact finding, the Labor Committee hired former Amtrak Police Chief Ron Frazier and current President of Countermeasures Assessment and Security Experts, LLC to expedite a current workforce study.

Amtrak's plan will shut down Police Field offices on the Northeast corridor and possibly around the country. This plan will leave stations, trains and facilities with less than skeleton staffing. The Amtrak community will be left at risk while placing officers in harmful situations.

This body appropriates billions of dollars annually to ensure the safety and security of our nation's airports. Yet the funding received by Amtrak to help support and facilitate its security pales in comparison yet sees as much if not more foot traffic than this nation's busiest airports. On a daily basis New York Penn station sees more passengers than LaGuardia, JFK, and Newark airport combined. Airport security is strong and well funded, however train stations deal with felony and misdemeanor crimes, increasing mental health issues, and threats of terror.



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Al Qaeda's Inspire magazine released a well edited how-to video on derailing passenger trains. Passenger rail remains a level two threat assessment according to the FBI, majorly concerning when our CEO is looking for pre-9/11 staffing levels.

CEO Richard Anderson's Police reduction also concerns us for our members sake as well. The numbers shown to us on May 1, 2019 reduce all of Amtrak's Police divisions. However, some will be reduced by almost 50% in order to reach Anderson's projected goals. Chief Trugman assured the labor committee there would be zero layoffs or furloughs. Amtrak plans to reduce the police force through attrition and a buyout plan. We don't believe these numbers are attainable. Talking with our members we've learned the majority of officers taking the buyout are officers who were going to retire inevitably.

The second step will be to offer Officers the ability to transfer, again our officers took these jobs with the belief they would retire from the same geo-location they hired on at. Member discussions have shown few if any will transfer.

Also concerning, if the attrition plan is unsuccessful will there be enough of transferable positions? With this, we don't believe the reduction goal will be reached. This labor committee has asked for answers. How do they plan to reach their reduction goals, we continue to patiently wait for those answers from Amtrak. Also, a major concern is, will Amtrak claim that there isn't a budget for the police department and make jobs disappear?

In closing, reducing this police force for any reason is perplexing. We believe Amtrak has a duty to protect its over 30 million passengers and the communities it serves as well as the communities it travels through. It is essential that Amtrak provides a sufficient police force to ensure these responsibilities to the American public.

Again on behalf of the Amtrak Labor Committee I'd like to thank the committee staffers, members of this committee, Ranking Member Crawford, and Chairman Lipinski for inviting us here today and allowing us to present our concerns. We are undoubtedly humbled and thank you for your service to our nation. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

William Gonzalez, President

Amtrak Police Labor Committee