



Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO

John Samuelson
International President

Alex Garcia
International Executive
Vice President

Jerome Lafragola
International
Secretary-Treasurer

Curtis Tate
International Administrative
Vice President

Mike Mayes
International Administrative
Vice President

"AMERICA'S FIGHTING DEMOCRATIC UNION"

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
Department of Transportation

Dear Secretary Duffy,

On behalf of more than 160,000 members of the Transport Workers Union of America (TWU), I am writing to follow up on your public comments and letters regarding the poor state of safety in our nation's transit systems. The TWU has been fighting for decades to focus transit agency management on the long-standing crisis of violence on our buses and trains, which is frequently directed at transit workers. We appreciate your efforts to direct more federal resources towards this urgent problem and the TWU stands ready to work with you to protect transportation workers and riders in our systems.

We also appreciate your frustrations with the boss of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (NYMTA). NYMTA CEO Janno Lieber and his ego are an extreme liability for transit workers, riders, and taxpayers. It would be a shame if Lieber's narcissism puts the entire system at risk. The TWU looks forward to working with you to make sure the tens of thousands of workers at the NYMTA and the millions of riders who use the system are never at risk due to the words and actions of this one, self-indulgent appointee.

The TWU strongly agrees with the concerns listed in your March 18 letter to Mr. Lieber that the NYMTA "must ensure a safe and clean environment, reduce crime and fare evasion, and maintain a safe operating system." Maintaining a state-of-good-repair and preventing violence is essential to achieving these goals. Unfortunately, historic federal prohibitions and onerous bureaucracy are hindering large cities like New York from improving public safety. In urban areas with more than 200,000 people, federal funds cannot be spent on transit operations. This arbitrary line requires agencies to maintain two sets of accounts (and two sets of the accompanying expenses) and incentivizes agencies to move money away from public safety to chase federal matching funds on capital investments.

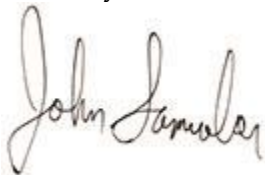
All of the most effective criminal deterrents depend on operations funding. Federal transit funds cannot be spent on policing, monitoring security cameras, installing and maintaining barriers, fare enforcement personnel, or any other public safety project

that relies on human activity. In New York City, for instance, we have twice seen massive deployments of uniformed law enforcement officers into the transit system in recent years. Both times (in the summer of 2021 and an ongoing deployment that began last year), assaults and other violent crimes immediately fell by more than 60%. When the previous deployment ended, these numbers slowly rose back up to their original levels – a clear indication that it was the extra policing that drove these improvements. The prohibition on using federal funds for operations means that not a single federal dollar has gone towards putting more police on trains, buses, and station platforms. This fiscal oddity makes it much more difficult to maintain public safety measures in our transit systems.

Addressing this issue ultimately depends on statutory change and we hope we can work with you to convince Congress to amend 49 USC 5307 to allow transit agencies to use federal funds for operating projects, including policing and other public safety measures. The current language, enacted during the Clinton administration, is clearly an impediment to the safety of our transit systems.

Safety and security in transportation requires regular human intervention. As you know from your work maintaining safety across our air, rail, maritime, and road systems, capital investments are necessary but can only take us so far. It is no different in transit. Safety depends on significant investments in skilled workers to operate, police, and maintain our transportation systems. I look forward to working with you to end the nonsensical prohibition on federal funds in transit operations so that we can harness the power of the federal government to reduce violence in public transportation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Samuelson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

John Samuelson
International President