



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

**ORAL
STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE PETER ROGOFF
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATOR**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS
BANKING SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
U.S. SENATE**

HEARING ON

HURRICANE SANDY

SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

[Oral Statement by FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff](#)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me today to highlight the Federal Transit Administration's role in responding to Hurricane Sandy nearly one year ago. This historic storm triggered the worst public transit disaster in the history of the nation. Hurricane Sandy disrupted more than half our nation's transit service at the height of the storm and impacted more than one-third of the nation's ridership in the days that followed the storm. So from the perspective of the FTA, this was a national disaster, not a regional disaster.

I'd like to highlight the extent of our role at the FTA in assisting with recovery efforts and our plan to make transit infrastructure more resilient in the future.

Within days of the storm, FTA sought and received two mission assignments from FEMA that allowed our two agencies to work side-by-side to evaluate the situation and conduct preliminary damage and cost assessments right away. This was a new level of partnership between the FTA and FEMA and it served us all very well. The early legwork quickly built the case for a

responsible federal aid package, which you two Senators championed through the Senate and has proven to be very successful in aiding in the recovery.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, we worked with the region's transit agencies to restore essential transit service to the public. For example, we helped the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey secure essential parts, like power circuit breakers, which we scoured around the country and found in Chicago, so we could reconnect PATH rail service between New Jersey and mid-town Manhattan.

In New Jersey, we worked with FEMA to procure 350 buses to temporarily replace lost rail service, enabling commuters to access jobs in Hoboken, Weehawken, Jersey City; and we ran express buses into Manhattan.

These are just two of many instances where we worked tirelessly with our transit partners to find short-term solutions to restore service for as many people as possible, as quickly as we could.

Then, in the span of just 16 weeks – beginning one week after President Obama signed the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act into law – FTA successfully allocated a total of \$5.7 billion for critical Sandy recovery and resiliency work.

To date, we've committed more than half – approximately 55-percent – of the available funds appropriated by Congress, which was, of course, reduced as a result of sequestration by some \$545 million. So in reality, we've made available more than 70 percent of the estimated cost for all the response and recovery needs.

These early accomplishments were made possible by the FTA's new Emergency Relief Program. The Obama Administration first proposed this program in our budget for fiscal year 2012 because we needed a mechanism to provide timely disaster assistance to transit agencies on a par with the assistance that we provide to state highway departments through the Federal Highway Administration. The ERP was – as you pointed out, Chairman Menendez – it was enacted just weeks before Hurricane Sandy hit, and we're very thankful that it did, because it has more than proven its worth, and it has allowed the FTA to respond in a manner that is a model for all federal disaster assistance.

I want to thank you, and especially this committee, for supporting our proposal in MAP-21. It has served us all well.

I do need to point out, however, that with hurricane season again upon us, Congress needs to know that while the President's budget for 2013 and 2014 each sought \$25 million for the ERP, Congress has yet to appropriate any of these funds. What this means is the only Emergency Relief funding we have at the FTA currently must, by law, be used exclusively for Hurricane Sandy.

I strongly urge Congress to provide the funding requested so FTA can be in a position to respond to the next transit emergency when it happens.

We've also set aside nearly one-third of the total funds allocated to help transit agencies begin investing in resiliency projects so their trains and buses, stations and subway tunnels, are better able to withstand future disasters and floods. This is an elemental part of the President's proposal that he transmitted back in December. Taxpayers should not be asked to pay for the restoration and recovery of public transportation assets a second or a third time.

And certainly the transit riders of New York and New Jersey, in particular, should not have to put up with the stress, the cost, and the inconvenience of having the same transit facilities destroyed one storm after another.

Many of you know, some of the very same transit assets that were flooded in Hurricane Sandy had been flooded just one year prior to that as part of Hurricane Irene. Importantly, Hoboken Terminal, an absolutely critical intermodal hub for New Jersey passengers – federal taxpayers had already put \$200 million into the restoration of that excellent facility. We will now, as a result of the storm, put several million more into restoration of the facility. This is the kind of thing we're looking at when we identify the priorities for resiliency funds.

Going forward, FTA's first and highest priority for fostering resiliency among transit systems is to better protect these new transit facilities and equipment from the impact of the next disaster.

We're confident that funds set aside for the recovery, along with local matching funds and insurance proceeds, will be sufficient to meet all of the recovery and restoration needs of the region.

In the weeks to come, FTA will issue a notice of funding availability for capital projects that reinforce critical transportation infrastructure in the region impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Awarding these funds will help ensure that the best and most important projects are put forward.

Our process for awarding these dollars will be informed, in part, by the recommendations of the Sandy task force – just discussed by Secretary Donovan – in their report which was issued back in August. Especially, there are a number of recommendations they have that relate to coordination that will be very important. If we don't have a coordinated regional response, we could have investments that protect one rail yard against rising waters only to flood a neighboring rail yard that may even serve more passengers.

So Secretary Donovan has done the President, his federal partners, the whole region a great favor in putting together this interagency task force, which has given rise to recommendations that I think will improve all of our processes going forward.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, this concludes my statement and I would be happy to answer any questions.

