

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 9, 2015

Mr. Jack Requa  
Interim General Manager  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Requa,

We are deeply disturbed by the circumstances that led to this week's National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for immediate action to ensure that all power cable connector assemblies are properly constructed and installed in accordance with WMATA's own engineering design specifications. The recommendation issued by NTSB highlights an unacceptable condition in which numerous flaws and inconsistencies with the installation of the connectors have been allowed to persist throughout the system without any oversight or quality control.

According to the NTSB report, cable connectors are required to be installed with sealing sleeves to ensure that the connector assemblies are weather-tight and prevent contamination that can lead to a short circuit, which can produce smoke and fire within the system tunnels. However, NTSB has found many assemblies installed without this critical component, "often with heat shrinking tubing or electrical tape used in place of sealing sleeves; and with different types of terminal lugs, some of which are not specified for use with their connector covers."

NTSB investigators found the cable connector assembly involved in the February 11, 2015, arcing incident at Court House Station on the Orange Line "was missing its sealing sleeves." While the cable connectors in the January 12, 2015, fatal incident at L'Enfant Plaza on the Yellow Line were too charred to offer conclusive evidence, the NTSB notes that the post-accident repairs "did not include the sealing sleeves." In addition to the lack of uniform installation that adheres to WMATA design specifications, NTSB reports that WMATA "does not have a program to ensure that power cable connector assemblies are installed in accordance with its engineering design specifications." With connectors in place every few hundred feet along miles of metro track, this lack of oversight is unacceptable.

We are appalled that riders' lives may have been put at risk simply because a small, yet critical component of the power cable connectors was not installed as required by the manufacturer's directions and WMATA engineering specifications. Problems arising from aging infrastructure may be understandable, but WMATA must explain how a failure to follow basic assembly instructions has been allowed to persist.

In the wake of this latest NTSB report, we request the following:

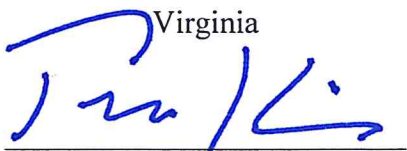
1. A system-wide accounting of power cable connector assemblies that do not include sealing sleeves or other proper components in accordance with WMATA design specifications;
2. An explanation of how and why installations were performed without the sealing sleeves, an explanation for why WMATA has no system of quality control in place for this work, and what corrective actions will be taken to correct this situation; and
3. A comprehensive timeline and cost estimate for fixing this issue throughout the system.

WMATA has spent considerable time and money working on the system upgrades that are necessary to maintain safety and reliability, and the federal government has made significant investments in those efforts. We, and our constituents, expect WMATA to provide robust oversight and exercise strict accountability to ensure this work is done properly, in accordance with WMATA's own standards. Immediate action must be taken to protect the safety of all riders and ensure that we do not have repeated incidents. We ask for your swift attention to this inquiry and request a response addressing these and any other issues associated with this latest NTSB recommendation within 30 days. We will continue to work closely with you and the WMATA Board of Directors to resolve these issues.

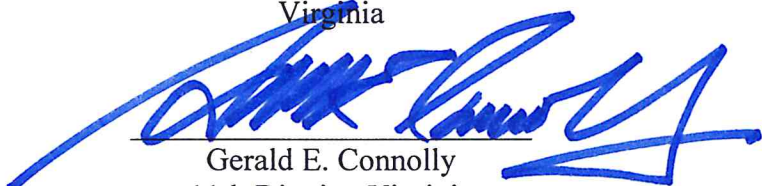
Sincerely,



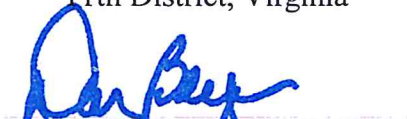
Mark R. Warner  
Virginia



Timothy M. Kaine  
Virginia



Gerald E. Connolly  
11th District, Virginia



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
8th District, Virginia



Barbara Comstock  
10th District, Virginia



John K. Delaney  
6th District, Maryland



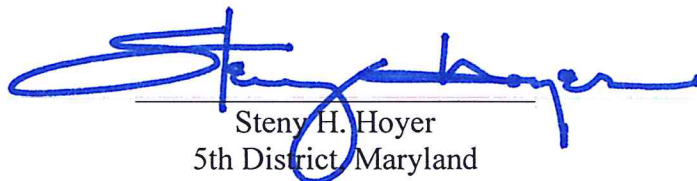
Barbara A. Mikulski  
Maryland



Benjamin L. Cardin  
Maryland



Chris Van Hollen  
8th District, Maryland



Steny H. Hoyer  
5th District, Maryland



Donna F. Edwards  
4th District, Maryland



John P. Sarbanes  
3rd District, Maryland



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
At-large, District of Columbia