



**MASSACHUSETTS
BAY
TRANSPORTATION
AUTHORITY**

Board of Directors
Transportation Building
Ten Park Plaza
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

July 27, 2009

Mr. James Aloisi
Massachusetts Transportation Secretary
Executive Office of Transportation
10 Park Plaza
Suite 3170
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Chairman Aloisi,

The purpose of this letter is to express our concern over the findings of the recent National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) report and MBTA management's failure to respond to widespread public concern about these findings.

The NTSB *Summary of Findings* was critical of the MBTA for failing to ensure that its fatigue educational awareness program is adequate for purposes of helping avoid the tragic crash that occurred on May 28, 2008. The NTSB also cites "the lack of a positive train control system" and "inadequate requirements" for train operators to report signal failures on the Green Line. During the NTSB hearing, NTSB Board member Robert Sumwalt said he was "fairly incredulous" that the MBTA does not have a formal system to check whether train operators are obeying signals and following other safety rules. He also spoke to the "lack of a safety culture" at the MBTA. Given that the report release date was scheduled months in advance, the Board and the public had a right to expect that the General Manager would have promptly and fully responded to the NTSB's findings and recommendations.

It is very troubling that we have yet to receive a detailed response from the General Manager, especially since the NTSB is also investigating another major Green Line accident which occurred on May 8th, 2009.

Both the General Manager and the Chief Operating Officer were conspicuously absent during the week the NTSB report was released. The only comments by Authority management on the NTSB Report came late on the day that the NTSB hearing occurred by the MBTA spokesperson who challenged a key NTSB recommendation to implement a train control system on the Green Line.

Since the tragic Green Line accident that caused the death of operator Terrese Edmonds, the Board has been eager to receive the NTSB's recommendations. Over the past year our concerns about the General Manager's focus and commitment have grown as the MBTA continues to experience an increase in rail vehicle accidents, fires, signal system failures and power outages.

On May 21st, 2009 the MBTA experienced a massive system-wide power outage that stranded tens of thousands of people in the subway for several hours. Just two months later on July 18th another power outage again stranded thousands of people for several hours on the Green Line. Again, the General Manager was conspicuously not out front explaining these failures to the Board or the public.

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These incidents may ultimately erode the public's confidence in the MBTA. We have certainly lost confidence in the General Manager's ability to take ownership of the failings of an agency he has led for nearly five years. Nor do we have any confidence that he can execute a plan that will address our concerns at this critical juncture.

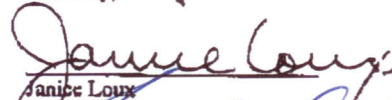
Sadly, the General Manager seems to be out of touch. Just last month he suggested that calls to improve the signal system (a key NTSB recommendation) were a "distraction". The agency spokesperson defends the status quo by questioning the feasibility and cost of a new signal system for the Green Line.

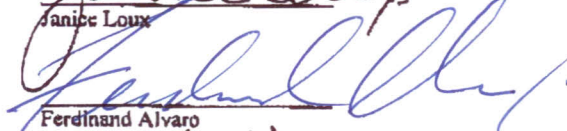
Why isn't the focus on decisive action? Why weren't these issues addressed over the past year? The NTSB findings show a consistent pattern of issues that have not been addressed. The NTSB's ongoing review of the most recent serious accident is focused on some of the very same issues that were factors in the accident that caused the death of Terrese Edmonds.

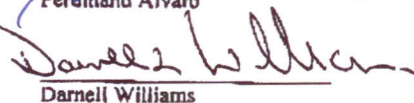
We want some answers. We believe that the NTSB Report sounds an alarm for all of us to respond immediately to ensure public confidence in the MBTA. We believe that the General Manager is unable to respond in an effective way to the urgent need for action.

Public confidence in the transit system is at stake and we are respectfully requesting the following: 1) a comprehensive presentation about the NTSB's findings and recommendations, 2) a review of the General Manager's approach to dealing in a timely and appropriate way to the safety and operational issues raised in this letter and a decisive action plan that focuses on passenger and employee safety, and 3) a new protocol that requires any public comments by agency spokespersons, i.e. the MBTA press office, should be supervised by your office.

Sincerely,


Janice Loux


Ferdinand Alvaro


Darnell Williams

