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CONTACT: John O'Donnell  
212-920-4889  
j-odonnell@twu.org

**TWU INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT HARRY LOMBARDO ASKS CONGRESS FOR  
LONG-TERM SOLUTION ON NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE & TO PROTECT  
TRANSIT WORKERS**

**Washington D.C.** -Transport Workers Union of America (TWU) President Harry Lombardo testified before Congress today on the need to find a long-term, sustainable source of funding for transportation infrastructure in America, while also stressing the need to protect transit workers on the job. His remarks came in testimony during the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs' hearing on reauthorizing MAP-21, the federal surface transportation legislation.

President Lombardo highlighted the unique history of TWU, stressing its role in some of the greatest issues facing our nation over the last 80 years.

"TWU has been the backbone of historic worker struggles on issues ranging from equality, human rights, and civil rights to workplace safety and work rules," he informed the committee. "We believe that all Americans are entitled to their piece of the American Dream regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or creed."

President Lombardo discussed the consequences for the future of the country - hours lost and money wasted - because of the poor quality of our infrastructure. He noted the peril we are placing future generations in if we fail to act now to provide a long-term, sustainable funding solution for the nation's infrastructure. Moreover, stopping the alarming rate of assaults on transit workers is a key priority of the TWU. There are easy solutions to this problem, but he stressed that the will to act must be there to create these solutions.

“On average, there are over 200 reported physical assaults annually against bus operators in New York City and Philadelphia combined,” noted President Lombardo. “These operator assaults cannot continue. Working class Americans should not go to work every day fearing for their safety on the job. The solutions aren’t difficult and we need this Congress to prioritize the safety of our riders and our operators by installing plexiglass barriers.”

He called on Congress to take action on providing operating assistance in addition to capital investment. He discussed the need to both maintain and modernize our transit systems, and the dangers of relying on public private partnerships.

“I believe if we collectively have a backbone and confront the problem, we can develop a bi-partisan solution to invest in the future of America,” concluded President Lombardo. “So I have a simple message today – let us find those on each side of the aisle with a backbone. Let us end this 20-year debate for a sustainable, long-term solution. And let’s get America moving again!”

Harry Lombardo was elected international president of the TWU in 2013 after serving as the international executive vice president since 2006. The native Philadelphian started with TWU Local 234 in 1972 as a car cleaner for SEPTA. He was promoted the following year to mechanic. He was soon named business agent for Local 234, the youngest business agent in the local’s history to that time. He served as local president from 1989 until 1996 when he was named to the international staff. He was elected international vice president in four consecutive conventions.

A copy of President Lombardo’s full oral testimony is below. A copy of his written testimony is attached.

For more information on the TWU log on to [www.twu.org](http://www.twu.org) and follow on Twitter @transportworker.

*Good Morning Mr. Chairman.*

*On behalf of the Transport Workers Union of America and our 200,000 members and retirees - thank you for having me here today to testify on such a critical issue. To the members of the committee I look forward to a positive discussion today.*

*I am the ninth President of the Transport Workers Union of America and the TWU is a proud activist union. We have deep roots in our communities and a variety of industries in which we play an essential role in enhancing the quality of life of all Americans and our economy – WE MOVE AMERICA.*

*From New York to San Francisco, should you ride on a plane, train, bus, subway, and now, even a bike, you are a beneficiary of our proud, hard working, well trained, and*

*skilled members.*

*Our members serve as the BACKBONE of the transit, air and rail systems in this country.*

*I grew up in Philadelphia and as a young man I learned quickly you needed a backbone to move ahead. I became a member of TWU Local 234 as a car cleaner for SEPTA, our public transit system. I, like all young folks, wanted to participate in the American dream.*

*I worked hard and played by the rules and began to move up through the union. I was promoted to a rail mechanic, became a shop steward shortly thereafter, and just five years later became a business agent. Now I am the international president. This is indeed an amazing country.*

*I am so proud to serve in this role because TWU has been the backbone of historic worker struggles on issues ranging from equality, human rights, and civil rights to workplace safety and work rules.*

*We believe that ALL Americans are entitled to their piece of the American Dream regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or creed. That dream is now at risk for those following in our footsteps because we are not upholding our responsibility to them to invest in their future.*

*Where is our backbone? Where is our commitment to the future?*

*Lack of infrastructure investment has horrendous consequences for the future of our country.*

*Consider the following:*

*Americans spend 5.5 billion hours in traffic each year, which costs families more than \$120 billion in extra fuel and lost time.*

*American businesses pay \$27 billion a year in extra freight transportation costs, increasing shipping delays and raising prices on everyday products. And, by failing to invest, we are closing the door on our future.*

*In addition, and more importantly, we are passing this debt and this burden on to our kids and grandkids.*

*We have an obligation here to give the next generation a better shot than the one we had – we cannot imperil future generations by failing to act now.*

*Look, we all know the gravity of the situation we face, yet we have failed to have a*

*BACKBONE on this issue for over 20 years...*

*The time has come...we need to act!*

*We need a long-term sustainable program.*

*We need to fund the program.*

*We need to prioritize the health and safety of our workforce - and improve working conditions.*

*The increasing number of assaults on our operators has to be addressed.*

*On average, there are over 200 reported physical assaults annually against bus operators in New York City and Philadelphia combined.*

*These operator assaults cannot continue.*

*Working class Americans should not go to work every day fearing for their safety on the job. The solutions aren't difficult and we need this Congress to prioritize the safety of our riders and our operators by installing plexiglass barriers.*

*We need to provide operating assistance, on a temporary and targeted basis, in addition to capital investment. We MUST provide the basic critical funding to this national priority. Operating cuts threaten public transportation systems and this Congress should not tolerate it.*

*We have to both MAINTAIN our systems AND MODERNIZE them.*

*We need to stop thinking that Public Private Partnerships are a panacea for transit.*

*In fact, in many cases, P3's threaten the public interest by undermining commitments to timely and safe transit service, and to workers, wages and retirement security.*

*I believe if we collectively have a BACKBONE and confront the problem, we can develop a bi-partisan solution to invest in the future of America.*

*So I have a simple message today –*

*let us find those on each side of the aisle with a backbone –*

*let us end this 20 year debate for a sustainable, long-term solution -*

*and lets get America moving again!*

*Mr. Chairman, once again on behalf of our members, I thank you for having me and would be happy to take any questions the Committee may have.*

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