



Homeland
Security

Press Release

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DHS Seeks Public Comment on Testing of Biological Sensors in MBTA Subway System

BOSTON, MA — The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) has partnered with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to test a system of newly developed biological detection sensors at MBTA stations in Cambridge and Somerville this summer.

DHS conducted an environmental assessment and found no significant impact in using an innocuous, food-safe test bacterium to evaluate the ability of the system to rapidly detect hazardous biological materials in the subway. A Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) is now available for public comment. Addressing public concerns regarding the test and evaluation of this detection system and the possible environmental impacts are important to DHS.

The DEA can be downloaded from the DHS Website <http://www.dhs.gov/nepa> (or directly at http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/st/st_dea_detect_to_protect.pdf). Comments on the document and test plan may be submitted to: MBTATest@hq.dhs.gov. In addition, a public forum will be held on May 16, 2012 from 5:30-7:30pm at the Cambridge YMCA in Central Square, 820 Massachusetts Avenue, for any interested parties to voice their concerns and comments. DHS will take into consideration all comments on the DEA received by the close of business of June 15, 2012. Please ensure any of your comments include a name and address for any needed clarification or follow up.

These sensors have been designed to enable rapid responses and protective measures within 20 minutes to reduce the impact of a biological terrorist attack. While the systems are being evaluated, Massachusetts public health officials will be working closely with DHS and the MBTA to monitor the results. The MBTA and DHS are coordinating these efforts with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Cambridge Public Health Department, and the Somerville Health Department, with support from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

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