

Board member demands MBTA audit

By Marie Szaniszló | Thursday, August 14, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Politics

A member of the MBTA's board of directors yesterday waged an all-out assault on the agency's general manager, demanding an audit and saying she had lost confidence in him and in the safety and security of the T.

At a board meeting, Janice Loux cited a series of incidents that had occurred on Daniel A. Grabauskas' watch, from a fatal Green Line accident in May to three MIT students' claims that the CharlieCard, the T's automated fare collection system, is vulnerable to hackers.

"I have grave concerns today," Loux said, "and I have lost confidence in the general manager."

Bernard Cohen, the board's chairman and the state's transportation secretary, said he had asked Grabauskas to review the T's safety record and procedures after the Green Line trainwreck that left 24-year-old operator Terrese Edmonds dead.

"I have confidence in the safety of the MBTA system," Cohen said. "We can all do better in this area. No accident is acceptable . . . But the general public should feel safe riding the MBTA."



Photo by Herald (file)

But Loux called for an outside audit, noting that safety was not the only issue.

The T gave a no-bid contract for CharlieCard services to a former government employee, she said. And, in addition to finding security problems with the CharlieCard, MIT undergrads Zack Anderson, R.J. Ryan and Alessandro Chiesa also claim to have found unlocked turnstile control boxes, control and surveillance rooms left unattended and keys left in unlocked boxes in public areas, Loux noted.

"This reaffirms my concerns about safety and security," she said.

The board will decide the scope of any audit in the coming weeks before deciding whether to proceed with one.

In the meantime, lawyers for the MBTA are due in court this morning to try to block the MIT students from releasing any information that could jeopardize the T's fare collection system.

"We just want to make very clear that we're not interested in quashing anyone's First Amendment rights," Grabauskas said, declining to respond to Loux's criticisms. "All we're really asking is that the court bar the release of any nonpublic information that might adversely affect the CharlieCard's security."

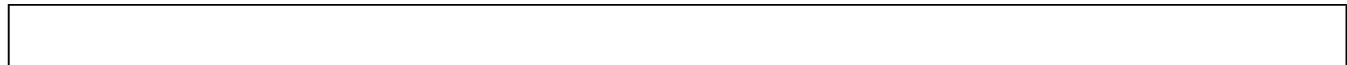
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