



DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

56240 3502  
NEWS

## FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

REMARKS OF FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR  
F. C. TURNER FOR DELIVERY AT THE MID-YEAR  
CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN TRANSIT  
ASSOCIATION AT MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, MARCH  
30, 1971

### "LET US FORM AN ALLIANCE"

The winds of change are sweeping the Nation more powerfully today than they have in many a decade.

Change is everywhere. Values have changed. Priorities have changed. Our concerns have changed. I think it is safe to say that, consciously or subconsciously, most of us have changed to some degree in the past few years.

This is natural, for change is inevitable. While the effects of change often are temporarily painful -- and sometimes difficult to adjust to -- change in itself is desirable. It prevents stagnation and atrophy -- it generates new ideas, new philosophies.

As with other aspects of our national life, the highway program,

too, has changed. We are doing things differently -- and better -- than we used to do. We have new goals, and new philosophies as to the best way of attaining them.

One of these new philosophies is the emphasis we are placing now on moving people over urban freeways, rather than merely vehicles. We feel it is essential that the greatest productivity be realized from our investment in urban freeways.

It is from this standpoint that I come here today to urge, as it were, a "grand alliance" between those of you who provide and operate the Nation's transit facilities and those of us who are concerned with development of the Nation's highway plant.

Centuries ago, John Donne said it well: "No man is an island..". Today I would paraphrase that and suggest that no organization, no group is an island in our complex and interwoven way of life. We must all work together for the general good, for the common cause.

I believe we have much to offer one another. On our side we have the largest highway program in history, which has provided this Nation with the most efficient, safest highways the world has ever known. On your side, you have the expertise needed to move large masses of people over those highways.

Let me add a personal observation on behalf of your highway partners. The Federal-aid highway program is a long-established program, and is itself a successful partnership of officials at all

levels of government. We are proud of our record of accomplishment in creating new dimensions of mobility for many millions of our fellow citizens. We have a reputation for getting things done. We value that reputation. I can assure you with no hesitation that when we commit ourselves to improving urban public transportation, we do not intend to fail. We will do our darndest to make it work.

We are stressing highway-oriented transit because we are convinced that it is the wave of the seventies. Of course, there are some of our largest cities -- perhaps 10 at most -- where rail rapid transit can or does already play a vital role. I do not minimize this contribution -- I welcome it.

But for most of our cities -- large, medium-sized, and small -- only buses can do the job.

To enable them to do the job, however, certain changes -- physical and philosophical ones -- must be made.

We all are aware of the rush hour congestion that frequently slows traffic to a much less than desirable pace in many of our cities during the peak inbound and outbound hours. Caught in that congestion are your transit buses -- as I am sure I do not have to remind you.

This is a familiar enough problem, and a familiar, and plaintive, comment is, "Somebody should do something."

Well, "somebody" is doing something. Among others, that generic "somebody" includes the Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

As public officials, we must be receptive to what the public wants. I think you will agree that all else being equal, the American people have shown an overwhelming predisposition to personal transportation. There is no mystery about this -- they simply like the convenience and freedom of driving their own cars. And generally speaking there is nothing wrong with that. I daresay most of us here today share that inclination.

However, in many cities the rush hour congestion problem is a real one -- one that, as Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe has repeatedly said, we simply must solve.

And we can solve it.

A giant step in this direction is providing preferential treatment for transit buses on freeways and city streets during rush hours.

This is absolutely imperative, because in order to get people out of their cars and on to the buses, they must be given some real incentives. One such incentive is realizing a substantial time savings. If a commuter realizes that it will require considerably less time for him to get to work by taking the bus than by driving, he may well be induced to leave his car at home.

Of course, there are other important considerations. The bus

service must be convenient and comfortable, as well as fast. This means that the buses should be reasonably accessible. Along this line, it seems to me that there is a need to design bus transit systems so that -- wherever feasible -- routes operate in residential neighborhoods on a grid pattern, at about 10 block intervals, so that no one must walk more than five blocks to a bus stop. The same situation should prevail in the downtown area, as well. This is an aspect of bus service that deserves serious consideration.

And for those commuters whose residential areas make it impossible to walk to the bus, we must provide convenient parking facilities so that they can drive to it.

There are several promising avenues that might be explored in regard to this. What about church parking lots ... or drive-in movie parking lots... or sports stadium or auditorium parking lots? What about the huge parking lots at the suburban shopping centers? What I am thinking of are those facilities that are either unused or utilized far below capacity during the daytime hours on the Monday-through-Friday work days. Doesn't it seem reasonable that arrangements could be made with the owners of these lots so that commuters could drive to them, park, and board an express bus for the trip into the downtown area?

I think this is an approach with great potential. It should be pursued on an extensive scale.

Finally, in order to persuade large numbers of commuters to ride the rush hour transit buses, the buses themselves must be clean and modern. They must contribute much to making bus commuting a pleasant experience. And it goes without saying, of course, that these advantages of riding the bus must be extensively and aggressively promoted, so that the public is adequately aware of them.

All of the foregoing obviously points to the necessity for a coordinated, cooperative effort in order to make this imaginative program a highly successful one.

From the Department of Transportation's standpoint, the Federal Highway Administration stands ready to help the States provide the special highway facilities that will enable buses to provide truly rapid transit, such as exclusive or preferential bus lanes on freeways, and even separate bus roadways. Highway funds can also participate in providing the necessary passenger loading facilities, parking areas, and traffic control devices. The Urban Mass Transportation Administration, as you know, will provide the grants that will enable bus companies to serve the public with modern buses.

City highway departments must cooperate in providing preferential treatment on downtown surface streets leading to freeways.

And you, as the transit operators, carry a big share of the burden. You must be able to provide buses that are clean and comfortable, that contribute as little as possible to air pollution, that

maintain convenient schedules, and that run on time. The personal element is important, too; you must make certain that your drivers and other personnel treat passengers courteously, and that they be helpful in providing information concerning schedules, routings, etc. Your information facilities should be readily available.

And, again, you must aggressively promote your product!

There is still one more essential component to this heterogenous mix: the transit regulatory bodies. These agencies must give the transit operators more flexibility in routing, in trying innovative ideas. The buses must be routed where they can provide maximum service, and where they can attract maximum use. Here, again, we come back to change; residential areas change, population corridors change. Bus companies must be receptive to these changes -- and the regulatory agencies must permit them to be.

Accepting, then, the premise that this must truly be a cooperative undertaking, what are some of the techniques for giving buses preferential treatment that I have alluded to here today?

Last year, when I addressed this group in St. Paul, Minnesota, I mentioned some experimental programs that we were just launching, or which we were considering.

Today I am happy to be able to give you a very encouraging progress report on these projects.

Just six days from now, a significant transit bus experiment in the Washington, D.C.,- suburban Virginia area is going to reach full

fruition, when a 10-mile exclusive bus lane on Shirley Highway -- which is part of Interstate 95 -- is opened all the way into the heart of downtown Washington. This pilot project, which has national implications, has been in limited operation for a number of months -- as I reported to you last year -- and commuters using the buses have been saving from 12 to 18 minutes each morning. When the lane is opened April 5 all the way across a new bridge over the Potomac River, riders are expected to save up to 30 minutes each way every day. While ridership on the buses already has increased 35 per cent, we expect it is going to climb even more dramatically once the program is fully implemented.

As part of this experiment, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration has made funds available to purchase, over a two-year period, a fleet of 90 ultra modern buses to augment the existing rolling stock.

This program is a fine example of cooperation between Federal agencies, the Virginia and D.C. highway departments, several local jurisdictions, and the A.B. & W. Transit Company of Alexandria, Virginia. In Washington, the highway department is providing for an exclusive curb bus lane on 14th Street, N.W., the main artery leading from the bridge to the central business district. Cars will be prohibited from making right turns at key intersections, so as not to slow down the buses, and traffic signals will be timed to give the



buses a priority advantage.

I might suggest that many of you in the transit field might find it well worthwhile to come to Washington to see this experimental program in action. For if it works out as well as we expect it to, similar programs could well be implemented in many other urban areas. We would be delighted to have you come and see for yourself how this type of preferential bus treatment works in practice.

Last year I told you there was some consideration being given to creating an exclusive bus lane inbound on I-495 in New Jersey, between the New Jersey Turnpike and the Lincoln Tunnel. Well, that project not only was implemented, but it quickly turned out to be a tremendous success. More than 800 buses carrying approximately 35,000 commuters to Manhattan use this exclusive lane each morning -- and the commuters are saving 15 minutes daily. An interesting thing about this project is that the exclusive lane actually uses one of the outbound lanes, carefully protected from opposing traffic by special traffic posts, lane markings, changeable signs, and electronic aids. This experimental program was an unqualified success from the very first day it was implemented.

When I was with you in St. Paul last year, the so-called "Blue Streak" demonstration program was just about to start in Seattle. And I am glad to inform you that this is still another pilot

project that has proven highly successful. In Seattle, special express buses travel six miles between a 550-car parking lot in a residential area of the city to the heart of the downtown business district on the I-5 Freeway. At the downtown end, the buses use an exclusive on-off ramp, and for pickups in the afternoon rush hour, an exclusive wrong way lane on a one-way street. Bus commuters are saving around 20 minutes per trip, and the parking lot is completely full by 8:30 each morning.

I would pause at this point to point out something that may well have already occurred to you: each one of these programs -- Shirley Highway in Virginia, I-495 in New Jersey, and the "Blue Streak" in Seattle -- uses different methods to achieve the same goal, which is to make bus transit more appealing to the public by making it truly rapid service. This demonstrates the flexibility of highways in providing the service that best suits local conditions.

Incidentally, you will note that I used the word "public," rather than "commuters." I did so advisedly, because, as you well know, yours is a service that is essential to significant groups of citizens who are not necessarily commuters. I refer to the poor and the young and the elderly, who depend on public transportation for their mobility.

Getting back to our experimental programs for bus rapid transit, plans for an 11-mile exclusive bus highway, or "busway" in Southern California -- which a year ago were just being contemplated -- are being rushed to completion. This busway will provide commuter service between Los Angeles and the City of El Monte, and will be located partly within the median of and partly adjacent to the San Bernadino Freeway (which is part of Interstate 10).

Similar type facilities for bus rapid transit are being actively considered here in Milwaukee, in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Boston, and on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

So, much already is being done in the way of providing preferential treatment for buses to expedite the moving of people in our cities. This is no longer merely in the realm of theory; now we have on-going programs, about which we are most optimistic.

And I assure you that much more is going to be done. With the passage last year of the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970, we now have the legislative tools necessary to move more rapidly and on a greater scale in this direction.

We also are exploring some other imaginative ideas in this campaign to drastically reduce city traffic congestion. You may be interested in a brief description of some of them.

They would include greater emphasis on the use of car pools, along with providing incentives for their use, such as perhaps permitting them to travel on exclusive bus lanes; staggered work hours, and perhaps even staggered work days and weeks -- maybe even staggered work months! You may not think well of such ideas for fear they will work against your ridership potentials but whatever will free up traffic congestion will surely be of help to your own operations.

Looking ahead, we may see some vertical separation of pedestrians and vehicular traffic in the downtown areas, such as putting sidewalks at the second floor level, or, in limited instances, underground, such as in New York City and Montreal. There also may be time separation of commercial vehicles using city streets to deliver and pick up at stores in the central business district.

Use of computers to facilitate the organization of car pools on a wide scale in cities is now under active consideration.

I would emphasize -- these are not "far out" schemes or science fiction. They and others are, perhaps, much closer to actuality than many may think.

So we have no paucity of ideas in our efforts to eliminate the growing problem of urban traffic congestion. What remains to be done is to make them practical, to put them into effect.

We in the highway program accept -- we welcome -- the challenge.

But because these ideas are, of their very nature, innovative ones, public support is vital. Without it, we cannot succeed; with it, there is no limit as to what we may achieve in bettering this Nation's life style.

As I said before this forum a year ago: "The highway program needs public transportation, and public transportation needs highways. It is as plain as that."

So today I suggest a "grand alliance" between us, which can be beneficial to all concerned: to us, the highway officials; to you, the transit officials; and most importantly, to our customers -- our fellow citizens.

The Federal Highway Administration stands ready to do its part. Let's all work together on this program to improve the quality of urban life.

Because each of us has an essential role:

-- The Federal Highway Administration, in providing the modern, innovative and safe highway facilities that are needed.

-- Our sister agency, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, in providing the necessary financial assistance in acquiring modern transit vehicles, which, if buses, will operate on our roadways.

-- You, as the transit operators, in providing service that is clean, modern, convenient, dependable, courteous, -- and fast.

-- The city governments and regulatory commissions, which must provide vital assistance in making transit operations, especially buses, efficient carriers of people.

-- And, of necessity, all the citizens of the community, who must band together to provide the support that transit operations must have.

All of us are like links in a chain.

Let us all make certain that it is a strong chain.

# # #