



DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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ADDRESS BY FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR
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"BALANCED TRANSPORTATION -- WHAT IS IT?"

National Transportation Week is certainly an appropriate time to talk about balanced transportation for the Nation's Capital.

I don't know of any level-headed person who is not in favor of balanced transportation. But some people seem to become unbalanced in their approach to it!

So, at the outset, let us get into focus what balanced transportation really means.

First of all, it does not mean the expenditure of equal amounts of dollars on each of several particular transportation modes. In fact, to do so would insure the very imbalance in our transportation system which everyone is deploring.

What balanced transportation does mean is that each mode is utilized and supported in such amount as to achieve an over-all

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integrated system in which all modes are complementary -- not duplicative, nor competitive.

A balanced transportation system must be designed to meet the total transportation needs of the urban area. It should do so in a way that will provide the most effective, acceptable, and economic service attainable that meets the total needs of the community, both as individuals and collectively.

If it is to serve the total transportation needs, a balanced system must permit infinite flexibility of travel from any place to any other place. A balanced system must be designed not just for morning and evening rush hour travel demand, but for 24-hour usage every day. It must be designed not just for those trips when citizens are commuters, but for all the other times as well when the same citizens and their neighbors are making their non-work trips, which trips far outnumber the work trips. It must also provide for the movement of the goods and service vehicles that are vital to all residents of any urban area whether they be commuters or stay-at-homes, or are totally dependent shut-ins, who don't even own or operate their own automobile.

This essential need for the movement of goods and services is universally overlooked by the ardent advocates of some of the people-mover modes. A balanced system must give full weight to individual

preferences, while at the same time being responsive to over-all community goals and objectives. It must be the most effective service facility -- which may not necessarily be the cheapest of several sub-unit facilities.

Now if this is an accurate description of what we mean by balanced transportation for urban areas, it follows that highway people have a vital interest in it.

Urban streets and highways are the only mode which provides access to all community facilities, and all land uses. Highway transportation provides the overwhelming bulk of the capability required to create an effective, balanced system, and thus our balanced system must include very large amounts of cooperation and contributions by the highway program.

It also follows, if I am correct about what we are striving for in balanced transportation, that funding decisions must be guided by what will produce the most efficient, effective, satisfactory and economic blend of services. If such decisions are made on any other basis -- such as an arbitrary equal-shares division of money among modes -- the result is bound to be an uneconomic and unbalanced system, and a misuse of the public investment.

Now let us examine the outlook for balanced transportation in Washington. Fortunately, we already have a balanced transportation plan here,

worked out cooperatively by the affected political jurisdictions and modal agencies.

But the plan will be of little value if it is not fully implemented, as intended by the planners.

As the signs in stores along G Street proclaim, "Metro Is Coming," and that is certainly a part of the Washington balanced transportation plan. We welcome the contribution it is intended to make in the over-all movement of people during rush hours in the Washington area. It has been planned to serve an important role in the city's transportation scheme.

But it would be a costly disaster to accept the assertion of some that it is the total panacea for all of our transportation needs, and that we thus can forget the highway program.

Integral to the construction of Metro is the construction of the freeway facilities that are presently included in Washington's balanced transportation plan. The whole is the sum of its parts, and if some of the parts are missing, obviously the final product is not going to function well as a unit.

Unfortunately, though, there are some people who believe that with the advent of a rail rapid transit system there will then be no need for highways. Nothing could be further from the truth, and if this concept should prevail, the consequences for this metropolitan area will be nothing less than catastrophic.

Let us take a look at why this is so.

Everyone is aware of the rush hour problem -- when large numbers of people are coming into or going out of the city within about a two-hour time period. Incidentally, some 68,000 people now commute outward from the central Washington city to jobs in the suburbs -- a number which has doubled in just eight years time. So we have the problem of getting people out of the city, as well as into it, during these rush hours.

Now obviously Metro is going to help move some of these commuters during the rush hours -- and hopefully a large portion of them. But it can only do part of the total job. By its nature Metro will have fixed lines, which means that most people will have to move additional distances to get to its stations in order to use it, and if Metro is going to achieve its intended potential, many people will have to get to it by a street or freeway, either in cars or buses -- and away from it on their return trip.

Metro will run only in certain corridors -- not anywhere near all of our main population corridors so that people in all of these other corridors who still need to get to their working places will have to get there by other modes -- which simply means in a realistic way -- by highway.

But the important point that is generally overlooked is that highways provide mass transit, by buses, in larger volume even than Metro is intended to do.

An excellent example is the experimental exclusive bus lane service on Shirley Highway that is speeding commuters from Northern Virginia to their jobs in downtown Washington. This demonstration program has been highly successful, and will be even more so when the fleet of 90 modern buses funded by our sister agency, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, is put into service beginning with 30 to be delivered next month, and a year later when the final roadways replace the present temporary detour type of roadways. The fact is, the buses using this exclusive lane are even now taxed to capacity, and the addition of the new buses will enable more commuters to take advantage of the large time-savings and travel comfort offered by this rapid mass transit service -- on the highway network that at the same time is also available to and used by private cars, service vehicles, and trucks moving essential freight. Bus patronage on this route has already doubled due to the large time savings.

When the Shirley Highway reconstruction work is completed, the reversible lanes, which now only extend as far as Shirlington, will continue all the way into the new 14th Street Bridge, and we expect that bus rapid transit service utilizing these exclusive lanes will be continued as a permanent part of the Washington area's balanced transportation plan, even with completion of the Metro as planned. Perhaps similar arrangements in other corridors should now be receiving attention to bring benefits ahead of the availability date of the final Metro network. We are also giving consideration to permitting

some automobiles serving full occupancy car pools to have access to these lanes along with the buses. Whatever the system, it will be designed to insure that buses can continue to maintain an acceptable operating speed, because they are carrying the largest number of persons per vehicle and per unit of area of roadway space. Such a combined operation should prove to be the most efficient use of these reversible lanes.

Present agreements between the Virginia Department of Highways and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority also provide at this time for a rail transit facility in the median of Interstate Route 66 through portions of Arlington and Fairfax Counties. As now planned, the rail transit would enter the median of I-66 in the vicinity of North Harrison Street and end at Nutley Road, west of the Capital Beltway, a distance of approximately nine miles. Metro's plans call for passenger stations at East Falls Church, State Route 7, Gallows Road (Route 650), and Nutley Road (Route 243). As an alternate to the rail in the median proposal, the Virginia Highway Department and FHWA are presently considering an exclusive or preferential bus lane as an integral part of the roadway design. Such an alternate might be much cheaper in capital costs and provide mass transit at least 10 years before the rail line could be provided in this corridor.

This is but another example of multiple use that today's modern freeways are making possible! And entirely through highway funding.

Those persons who keep talking about using the Highway Trust Fund for mass transit are obviously not up to date in their knowledge of the highway program.

I have been commenting up to this point mostly on the rush hour problem of moving the commuters expeditiously. But there is more to the balanced transportation question -- a lot more. As I said at the outset, a balanced transportation system must do more than just provide for rush hour commuter movement. For the fact is that there are many people traveling in the metropolitan area -- at all hours of the day and night -- who rarely, if ever, come downtown. These are the ones who travel across the transportation corridors into the city, or who travel about in the suburban areas. In fact, in the Washington Metropolitan area today, as is typical of all other areas in the Nation, about 83 percent of all person trips begin and end outside the downtown area. People make these trips by highway -- because it is the only way, and realistically it will continue to be the only way. These residents must be served no less than the commuters, if you are to have a balanced transportation plan. Neither Metro, nor any other agency, except the highway departments, is planning to do anything at all to handle these kinds of transportation needs, which constitute the overwhelming bulk of any balanced transportation plan.

This is a very important point when we look to future transportation needs of the Washington area, and the relative roles of the various modes. I am relying here on figures developed not by highway

people but by Metro itself and by the Washington Area Council of Governments. In 1968, the Washington area had an average of 5.6 million person trips per day, of which only about 450,000 were handled by public transit. In 1990 it is estimated that average daily person trips will total 12 million, of which 1.1 million will be handled by mass transit -- both rail and bus. In other words, even with a healthy hopeful increase in transit ridership, highway trips by private auto will more than double in the next two decades and will still be 10 times the number of transit trips.

A balanced system must accommodate both of these needs -- not just one of them. To have balance, we obviously must continue a very high level of program to accommodate this more than 90% of the load carried by highways. This projection -- from non-highway sources -- should convincingly demonstrate the utter folly of any suggestion that highway improvement programs can be substantially reduced in the near future, without grave damage to mobility throughout the area and to any truly meaningful balanced transportation system.

Almost entirely overlooked by the editorial and feature story critics is the important fact that in addition to personal travel, we must always consider truck traffic. In goods movement, no matter what mode of intercity transport is used, the truck almost always originates and terminates all the cargo within a city. It is by truck that the stores in the city -- and in the suburbs, as well -- receive

the goods essential to the life of an urban area: its clothing, food, housing materials, appliances, newspapers, medicines, and so on, ad infinitum. None of these commodities will be shipped by Metro; they must still be transported by highways, and we will need an adequate and substantial street and highway system on which to transport them.

Think, too, if you will, of the many vital services -- most of which I am afraid we all are inclined to take for granted -- that are utterly dependent on highways, and cannot be shunted to Metro.

For only a few examples, think of the ambulance, which can mean the difference between life and death; the fire trucks, which can save a home or business -- if an uncongested street network is available to speed their trip and get them there in time. Fast travel for such equipment by our street network has certainly been an important factor in keeping your and my fire insurance premiums low. Have you ever considered this as a cash personal dividend that results from good highway and street accessibility? Consider too, the police car, which quickly provides you with protection or assistance when you need it, and the garbage truck which removes your refuse, as well as the repair truck, which brings the plumber, the electrician, the carpenter, the TV repairman, when you need them.

And think how grocery shopping has been greatly simplified because highways have permitted the development of the supermarket.

Now you jump into your car, drive to the supermarket, park, and load up a week or two weeks' supply of groceries. All of our groceries got to and from the supermarket by highway network. Even if you walk to the supermarket you use the highway and street network, because the sidewalk incidentally is a part of the street and in urban areas is generally provided and paid for out of the Highway Trust Fund.

And if you go to the drug store, the movies, a concert or a sporting event, your church, your civic association meeting, the Scout meeting, the bridge game, chances are that you will go by car. This gives just some idea of the relative importance of good highways in an urban area such as Washington. Highways are irreplaceable -- because there is nothing with which to replace them. They existed long before the automobile was invented. Their use for horses, donkeys, and camels and chariots is recorded in history from the very dawn of such history -- to provide access and communication for persons and their goods.

Actually, the Washington area highway system has been performing quite well. Some would have you believe that all urban traffic is slowly grinding to a complete standstill and that 3-hour traffic jams are the twice daily routine. In this connection it is interesting to note that in 1959 the average speed on Shirley Highway in rush hour was 4.1 miles per hour, but in 1970 it was 21.6 miles per hour. Similarly, on Pennsylvania Avenue, S. E., it was 14.2 miles per hour in 1959 and

15.6 miles per hour in 1970; on Arlington Boulevard, it was 12.2 in 1959, and 16.9 in 1970; and on New York Avenue, it was 7.5 in 1959 and 16.8 in 1970. Quite significantly, there were nearly twice as many vehicles in 1970 traveling at these faster speeds. So it would appear that the prophets of gloom have been reading the wrong papers or manufacturing their situations to fit a predetermined conclusion. More people are moving faster than ever before -- these are facts -- not rhetorical catch phrases.

There is no question that the Washington area's freeway system does need to be expanded and improved. In short, we need all of the freeways that have been so long planned as part of the balanced transportation program here. As I mentioned earlier, we welcome the arrival of Metro; but we also know -- as do the Metro officials also -- that, by itself, it can only perform one important, but limited part of the total transportation job. I think it is time that certain hard facts of reality are squarely faced. No city can either grow or remain viable without a modern highway system.

There is no question but that the overwhelming preponderance of Americans of all ages and circumstances prefer the comfort, privacy, and freedom of movement that only their private passenger car can provide. I am sure that, as individuals, most of you here today would agree with that -- despite certain drawbacks to the use of automobiles at various times.

I know that there are some people who for one reason or another say that they hate both highways and automobiles, and wish that they would just go away, to be replaced by some undefined form of Utopia where there would be no traffic problems. But there will be no disappearance of the traffic problem unless people also disappear -- our urgent task is to develop the best way to live with the auto, and quit wasting our time simplistically wishing it would go away, just by putting all of our chips on another mode. We need more -- not less transportation capability -- and to achieve it we need both more highway and more mass transit capability -- not less of either.

Perhaps I can put this whole thing into better perspective by posing a couple of hypothetical situations. Suppose there were no Shirley Highway here in the Washington area. Suppose, too, there were no Beltway (I-495).

It is true that Shirley Highway is often congested during rush hours (a condition, incidentally, that will be alleviated by the reconstruction project and the expanded use of the exclusive bus lane service). But what if there were no such facility -- think how impossible things would be for residents in this Northern Virginia area.

As to the Beltway, how often do you hear people say something to the effect, "How did we ever manage before it was built?" Its great value to this area is unquestioned; in fact, I feel certain that most

metropolitan area residents would describe the Beltway as absolutely essential to the mobility of the area.

But what if these two freeway facilities were to be eliminated tomorrow? Could Metro -- or any other conceivable system -- pick up the load and fill the gap?

But Shirley Highway and the Beltway are only two of the freeways that the Washington area needs. Without them, and other planned freeways of the balanced system, Metro will not even be able to perform its function with efficiency. For in the balanced transportation system planned for the Washington area, each mode is designed to complement the other modes, and all the parts are designed to function smoothly together as a whole. Take away any of the parts and you immediately have very real problems, for then the system is not going to function as planned.

While we are providing needed mass transit facilities in cities (both rail and bus) let us not lose sight of what these facilities can and cannot do; what they are designed for and what they are not designed for. Let us not be deluded -- nor deceived -- into thinking that they will eliminate the urgent need for new and improved highways, or that they can provide the services, and movement of goods that highways must do.

And let us not make the mistake of taking vitally needed funds from the highway mode to help finance any other mode unless a real

total improvement in transportation results therefrom. Such fiscal legerdemain would merely be like all magic tricks: only an illusion accomplished by an instantaneous distracting movement of the hands and mouth, followed by immediate disappearance of the illusion.

If more funds are needed for mass transportation purposes, and certainly they are, by all means let us try to find them -- but not by robbing the highway program with its equal or even more compelling needs.

Finally we must make certain that Washington's balanced transportation plan stays in balance by providing each of the parts that are needed to make up the whole.

Because we know what happens when something loses its balance.

It falls.

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