

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Statement by Alan S. Boyd, Secretary of
Transportation, Prepared for a Press
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It seems appropriate, as we draw to the end of the year and Congress is about to go home, to get together with all of you and take a look at some of the things that have happened since the Department formally came into existence on April 1.

I am sure we have made some mistakes but I also feel that we have had some fine accomplishments and I am hopeful and enthusiastic about the coming year.

Let me comment on this current session of Congress and how our own legislative proposals have fared. In the Department of Transportation, while Congress has acted in our major program areas, we still have several important measures pending. We hope to have progress next year on these, including, Highway Beautification, which has passed the Senate and has been reported out by the House Public Works Committee; our Gas Pipeline Safety Bill which has also passed the Senate and is currently under consideration by the House Commerce Committee; our Aircraft Noise Abatement Bill on which Hearings have begun; and our other measures including the Highway Safety and Beauty Trust Fund and the Airway, Highway, and Waterway User Tax Bills which are in the Ways and Means Committee and are, of course, involved in the larger overall Congressional and Administration discussion of tax measures.

I think one of the more gratifying aspects of these first months of the Department has been the degree of cooperation and assistance which we have received from the states in the implementation of our highway safety program and from industry in the implementation of our auto safety program. I don't believe I need to reiterate here how significant both these programs are in terms of what is perhaps our most important goal -- the prevention of death and serious injury.

All of us on occasion, I am sure, wish that we could move faster; that we could achieve the goals of our programs quicker. At the same time, in assessing where we are today, I think we have to be realistic.

I am pleased with the progress we have made in the automobile safety standards. Our first standards were issued

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last January affecting such things as braking, safety belts, energy absorbing steering columns, crash padding and so on. This was followed up with our proposal of some 47 new standards which will affect 1969 and subsequent model year automobiles. These standards place new emphasis on the improvement of safety as it relates to brakes, tires, lights, windshields, child and occupant protection, and other items.

We, also, have issued standards for insuring adequate safety reliability in automobile tires. The auto standards that we have issued and those we have under consideration by no means represent the ultimate in safety reliability that we all are striving for. Perhaps we will achieve this some day; however, our best efforts now are to continue to work hard and consistently to bring about motor vehicle safety improvements as fast as possible. I am convinced in my own mind that the safety features the auto manufacturers have incorporated into their new models and those incorporated in anticipation of new standards, already are saving many, many lives.

We are beginning to see the payoff already, I believe. For the first time in many years we have had an absolute drop in traffic fatalities.

Traffic deaths through September of 1966 had increased 3,400 or 10 percent over the same period in 1965. During the same period through September of this year, however, the number of traffic deaths actually decreased one-half of one percent. In 1966, there were 38,310 traffic deaths between January and September. During the same period this year there were 38,130 traffic deaths. At the same time the death rate per 100 million vehicle miles dropped from 5.5 to 5.2. I hope that these figures indicate that the increased attention to safety being paid by all segments of our public and private community is beginning to shatter the pattern of huge annual increases in traffic deaths each year.

In connection with this total effort for traffic safety, I also am pleased with the cooperation we are receiving from the states in their efforts to improve traffic safety programs. In June we issued the first 13 standards for implementing the National Highway Safety Act of 1966. These are standards designed to assist the states in improving their traffic safety program.

The states have reacted splendidly to the program. I'll give you two examples. In January of this year, only 21 states required periodic automobile safety inspections. Ten more now have inspection programs. In January, only three states required motorcycle riders to wear helmets. Twenty-eight more have passed helmet laws.

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Then there are the longer-range activities. We have a good start toward a new master plan for airports and airways control. And I believe we have made substantial progress in getting agreement on the need for a fresh approach to the construction of highways -- especially in and around cities.

Under our Department of Transportation Act, we are required to consider environmental factors in making decisions affecting route location of Federally-aided highways. We believe strongly in the importance of making the highway or freeway an integral part of the community not a cement barrier -- or a smothering concrete river which threatens to inundate an urban area. This is why we awarded a \$4.8 million contract to the City of Baltimore to finance a design concept team which will bring together traffic and safety engineers, architects, city planners, sociologists, economists and other affected citizens to produce the best possible routing and design for a section of Interstate highway through Baltimore. We have awarded a similar contract in Chicago and this approach is also underway in other cities as well.

The building of highways is expensive and difficult. Construction disrupts both the economic and social structure of the section of the city in which it is undertaken for months and even years. Once completed, there is no moving it or filling it in, or changing your mind. This is why we feel so strongly that every argument should be heard, every viewpoint solicited and every factor thoroughly considered before work begins. We hope we are doing that.

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