U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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REMARKS BY ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT THE DEDICATION OF THE RESTORED CABLE CAR BARN, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 10, 1967, 10:30 A. M.

I come here to lead the cheers for the Cable Car -- surely one of the most engaging examples of the irrepressible inventiveness of man.

Still, it shouldn't have endured these 94 years. Except for one thing -- it continues to do its job better than anything we've devised since Andrew Hallidie decided horses deserved a better deal than hauling high-hatted millionaires up to their mansions on this city's hilltops.

Let's face it: In an age of superjets and sonic booms, it ought not to be still clattering and clanging its way up and down the hills of this city as if it owned them -- and expected to outlive them all.

In an age of planned obsolescence, it ought not to have outlasted other forms of transportation that, at first glance, looked more durable -- and, at second glance, had disappeared.

In an age when so many transit systems come and go -- because so many transit riders don't -- it ought not be carrying more and more people every year.

More -

But here it is -- fresh and frisky as ever. Not just surviving, but thriving -- a noisy, bumpy, awkward and anachronistic contraption that, after nearly a century, serves as both showhorse and workhorse of the oldest ongoing transit system in the country, and one of the most effective as well.

Two members of my staff have lived in this city -- two men who regularly rode the Cable Car to work in the morning and home in the evening.

They tell me it's the only way to ride.

Obviously, there are lots of others who feel the same way.

Last fiscal year the Cable Cars carried close to ten million, nine hundred thousand passengers -- over 700,000 more than during the previous year.

The Cars have more business than they can handle. You have 39 cars now -- and I understand a fortieth is almost finished and will soon be ready for service.

The simple and, I suppose, startling fact is that the Cable Car is a superb success, and not merely as a tourist attraction. For millions upon millions of envious Americans it is the symbol of this city but it is also an effective everyday transit vehicle, carrying stockbrokers and secretaries, accountants and ad men, back and forth between home and office.

It really has a way with people.

The question is, why?

Why, with so much going against it, is the Cable Car -- after 94 years -- not just a going, but a growing, concern?

Well, I suppose any one of us could come up with a hundred and one reasons.

There is the sensation of riding it: a cross, I imagine, between a roller-coaster and a rumble-seat.

More -

To get a little more psychological, it doesn't isolate us or overwhelm us, or dwarf us or demean us, or close us in or cut us off -- and so on, and on.

But I think the main reason for its success is the obvious one, the one we're most likely to overlook -- and that is simply that it is so superbly suited to the people and the place that it serves.

That, in a nutshell, describes what any successful transportation system must be -- and what the Department of Transportation is trying to help our cities and states throughout the nation devise for themselves: a system that meets their needs as well as the Cable Car does yours.

We have a way of overlooking the obvious, in transportation as in other fields. And I think in the future we're going to have to be a lot more like that undoubtedly legendary little boy who had never been to the Fleishhacker Zoo and kept pestering his mother to take him. So finally one day she did, and she showed him the seals, and the elephants -- and took him around from one animal to another. But nothing seemed to satisfy him, he kept fidgeting and fussing. Finally, after they'd seen everything, and his mother in despair started to lead him out of the zoo, he said "But, Ma, when can I see the Fleishhackers."

We may laugh at the boy's naivete, but not at his logic. For, if his assumptions were equally as unwarranted and unquestioned as ours often are, at least he asked -- as we so often do not -- the obvious and essential question.

Undoubtedly, the absurdity of our predicament might occur to us as we crawl to work in the morning along a spanking new superhighway in our superpowered V-8's.

Yet our answer to the problem in many cases has been -- not to ask why, or what are the alternatives, or what does this do to our cities, our suburbs, ourselves -- but to sanction, by silence or support, a multiplication of freeways and highways that often multiplies the problem even more.

In transportation, as in other fields, we are in danger -- because we don't ask the obvious and essential questions -- of obliterating many of the distinctions that matter, and emphasizing those that don't. So often, for example, we lose sight of the distinction between ends and means, between human values and economic values, between personal convenience and public need. As a result, we spend untold amounts of

energy and ingenuity in trying to shape people to fit jobs, instead of trying to shape jobs to fit people -- and we allow our highways and freeways to determine the shape and character, the size and scale, of our cities, instead of the other way around.

In everything we are undertaking in the new Department of Transportation, we are trying to do one basic thing: To look and to try to get the country to look, at our transportation system in an entirely new light. For the first time in our history, we are trying to see transportation for what it really is -- an integral and important part of the total life of society, capable of immeasurably enhancing that life or of rendering it all but intolerable.

One doesn't, for example, have to be a world traveler to understand that where one form of transportation ends, another begins -- or if it doesn't you're in trouble. And one of the big jobs of the new Department is to help make sure the right ends meet -- to see to it that trucks and railcars, for example, can get in and out of docks swiftly and smoothly and without interfering either with each other or with other traffic.

And we all observe and experience, every day, the countless ways in which transportation affects and influences -- for good or evil -- our health, our attitude, our pattern of life, our physical and social environment. Its impact is as deep and direct upon the air we breathe as it is upon the way we live.

For this reason, our concern in the new Department must center principally upon our urban areas -- in which three out of four Americans now live. And the proportion grows every year.

There is no single answer to our urban transportation problem, because there is no single problem. The transportation problems of San Francisco and Detroit and Chicago are as different as the cities themselves.

For that reason, the "answer" to the so-called "urban transportation problem" will not come out of Washington's mimeograph machines any more than it has come out of Detroit's assembly lines -- it will not come from the sudden appearance of some radical new technology -- it will not come from an effort to exalt one form of transportation at the expense of any other.

The answer must come, instead, from within each urban area itself -- and it must come in the form of a balanced, total system suited to the unique needs of each area.

More -

And we've got to start where we are with what we have. Your Municipal Railway craftsmen, when they began to build the new Cable Car that will soon see service, started with a piece of an old Cable Car roof, a piece of a seat, and an old windshield wiper. And that is precisely how we must go about improving the transportation network of America.

There are some fancy technological feats we may be able to pull off in the far future. But for the foreseeable future, over the next few decades, most of the transportation progress in this country must come from improving what we have and using it better.

There's no question, for example, that there is a lot more capacity on most city streets than the congestion that occurs every rush hour might lead us to believe. And we are looking at all sorts of ways of making better use of the streets and highways we have -- ways that include off-street parking, special lanes for buses, off-street loading for trucks, so-called convertible streets (which run all one way in the morning and all the other way at night), radar-controlled signals on freeway entry and exit ramps, overpasses in city streets to eliminate intersection tie-ups.

Not all of these ideas are new -- it's surprising how old some of them really are. One possibility, for example, is the banning of large commercial vehicles from main streets during the daylight hours. Tokyo took this step in 1962. But that was not the first time in history. Freight carts once clogged the streets of ancient Rome so much during daylight hours that Julius Caesar ordered them to enter the city only at night. Which they did -- keeping everybody awake all night with their noise.

We are also, as you know, supporting demonstration projects to test the feasibility of new high-speed ground transportation -- and seeking, in every way we know how, to explore and uncover new ways of improving the public transportation alternatives now available in our cities. We are looking, for example, at the possibilities of free public transportation -- trying to find out just what the various costs and benefits are, and where it might be feasible and where not.

Long ago, a Mexican General in the struggle for California said of us: "These Americans are so contriving that some day they will build ladders to touch the sky, and once in the heavens they will change the whole face of the universe and even the color of the stars."

More -

So today our astronauts circle the globe in less time than it takes some Americans to commute to work.

But we have not been entirely successful in our earthbound contriving -- and some of our successes have been a lot closer to home than our General imagined.

San Francisco still ranks among the great cities in the history of the world in all fields and forms of transportation. You are embarked upon the most advanced and extensive new rapid transit system in the country in BARTD. I know the going has been bumpy. But I urge you to get together, to smooth out the rough spots -- and, above all, not to get off before the ride has even started.

And in the Cable Car you own the only transit system I can think of that people are not only willing, but genuinely want to ride.

Recently, I understand Jim Carr has insisted that women be allowed to ride on the outside steps of the Cable Car -- and that makes it the only public conveyance I have ever heard of to do the pedestrian a favor.

The Cable Car, as I have said, has a lot to teach us about meeting our transportation needs throughout the country.

I am, therefore, delighted to dedicate this Cable Car Barn -- restored, renovated and refurbished, just the kind of place every Cable Car deserves to come home to after a hard day's work.

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