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REMARKS BY ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE THE 86TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN TRANSIT ASSOCIATION, REGENCY HYATT HOUSE, ATLANTA, GA., MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1967, AT 10:30 A.M.

There is a story about an Englishman visiting San Francisco that has more than passing relevance to the problems we are here to discuss.

He is standing on a downtown corner with a native of the city who is guiding him around and he says:

"I have never seen so many people driving Jaguars and Bentleys.

This must be a very wealthy city."

And the San Franciscan says:

"Not necessarily. It's just that you have to pay cash to ride the bus."

I did not come here to rub it in.

It just seems to me that the story encompasses every factor that makes the days seem so long for transit managers in the mid-60's: the bus, the car and the 30-month installment plan that makes it easy for Americans to ignore the economic consequences of their transportation decisions.

It also helps measure the enormous changes in American life since your Association was formed.

There was little credit in those days.

There were no cars except horse-cars.

And Sam Foss's ballad, "The House by the Side of the Road" was part of the literary mainstream.

Now, some 85 years later, the horse-car is gone.

So, I have no doubt, is Sam Foss's house - done in by some interchange.

And the only track left on grade in most American cities is so thoroughly cursed every day by motorists, it's a wonder it hasn't melted into the pavement.

By any measure, America's transit industry deserved better.

It was a major force in making it possible over a half-century for working men to move their families out of the city and into homes with lawns and trees.

If it hadn't been for the transit industry, we could have not sustained the industrial effort of World War II because we could not have gotten the workers to the plants.

But instead of showing gratitude, we went out the minute the war ended and bought as many cars as we could.

But the days of change for transit in this country are not ended.

More are coming.

And there are signs that the new ones may make your struggles during the lean years worthwhile.

I say may, because while the climate is right for a return to transit, it is not a movement that will take place either automatically or easily..

In order for the transit industry to broaden its share of the commuter market, you must coax substantial numbers of Americans out of their cars and onto buses or into trains during the peak commuting hours. This would go against three decades of decline for transit.

It would mean breaking up one of the great love affairs of all time - that of the commuter and his automobile.

And it can be done only with a creative, energetic program based not on complaining about the car, but competing with it.

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What makes this even remotely possible is that many major cities in this country are under technological siege - a siege laid down in part by the very machines we worked so hard to develop as a means toward a better life.

If someone were to tell you he had seen:

- strings of noxious gases drifting among the buildings of a city
- black smoke blotting out the sun
- great holes in the major streets, filled with men in hard hats
- planes circling overhead, unable to land
- and thousands of people choking the streets, pushing and shoving in a desperate effort to get out of the city.

If someone were to describe that scene to you, you would be hard-pressed to know whether he was talking about a city at war or a city at rush-hour.

President Johnson has moved in the past several years to break this siege of the city.

He has put through massive school improvement and teacher training programs.

He has expanded training for the unskilled and has encouraged industry to return to the city where the jobs are so urgently needed.

He has stepped up slum clearance and remodeling of sagging neighborhoods and the creation of more parks.

The President's program is the most intensive effort in modern history to save, not just the cities, but the people who live and work there.

And a crucial part of that effort is the President's program to give the United States a better system of transportation.

The President asked for and got from the 89th Congress a new Department of Transportation because he felt that the way people and goods move in this country not only could be but must be improved.

Good as our transportation network is, it still fails us in many ways.

There are too many highway deaths, too many delays at our airports and too many frustrations in trying to move in the cities.

It fails us because in many cases the effect of transportation on the environment, the noise, the pollution, the congestion, gives us a net loss in the social ledger of social values.

Of all of transportation's failures, the worst is in the cities.

With nearly 70 per cent of all Americans living in or near the cities - seemingly all trying to go to the same place at the same time - we already put severe strains on the urban network.

In just 12 years, with little increase in the urban land area in which to make room for them - the network must meet the needs of another 70 million people.

Obviously, solving the problems of urban transportation alone, will not solve the problems of the cities.

But neither can we solve the other problems of cities until we have a better urban transportation system.

Let me make it clear that in approaching our mission, we act and will continue to act in the public interest, not in any private interest.

We are not here to choose sides among the modes of transportation.

We are here to devise systems for coordinating the work of all modes to give Americans a safer, more efficient, more economical way to travel and to move merchandise.

In that context, it does not take a very detailed analysis of the urban transportation network to isolate its most serious shortcoming.

We are using our best transportation resource - the world's most efficient system of streets and highways - in a most inefficient manner.

In rural areas, the system carries people and goods at rapid rates of speed over long distances, better than any other system in the world.

It is when this same system approaches the city that its design flaw becomes apparent.

We have built our urban highway network to move vehicles and only incidentally to move people.

When you have a system that counts its successes in terms of the number of vehicles it carries without distinguishing between the bus and its 50 passengers and the automobile and its one or two passengers then you have a system that was built for different needs than the ones we have today.

Promoting more efficient use of our streets and highways is taking some major changes in public policy.

Unlike a mountain, people will not climb on a bus just because it is there.

It must offer transportation that compares favorably with the comfort, the reliability, the convenience and the speed of the automobile.

And of those four, time spent on the road has shown up in study after study as the crucial factor.

Even with express service, commuter buses in the United States seldom average more than 28 miles an hour and in most cases that speed is as low as 16 miles an hour.

Let me say that this requirement for speed is not just part of the American mystique that says if it is faster it must be better.

In recent years, our newspapers, magazines and television have drummed into us the notion that computers are relieving us of much of our work and our leisure is increasing.

I have generally felt left out of this discussion of increased leisure, assuming I had just done something wrong along the line and was not getting my share of extra time off.

Recently a professor in Michigan decided to investigate leisure.

The result: Americans generally have no more leisure today than they had in the 1930's.

And any way a commuter can find to shave time from his travel he will use that way.

Our Federal Highway Administration has recently urged state highway officials to give more consideration to the use of reserve lanes for buses and has said Federal-aid funds may be used in such a program.

Where bus service will not justify exclusive use of lanes at peak hours, buses might be given preference with a limited number of cars allowed into the lanes.

Federal funds would also be available to build special ramps that would permit buses to bypass traffic and go directly to the freeway.

At the outset, we said service of between 180 and 120 buses an hour would be needed to justify exclusive use of lanes by buses.

I am perfectly aware that there are only two places in the nation with headways near that today and that neither are on freeways.

But each case will be considered on its merits and I want to assure you today that we will consider any reasonable proposal for increasing the productivity of highways.

There is no fast rule in this area because there is no past history.

There are no reserved lanes on any freeway in the country.

I urge you to begin thinking seriously about this; to talk with your city and state highway officials and to ask us for technical advice if you need it.

This is not a program we want to leave on paper for very long.

We want it on the road.

If you have doubts that faster service will attract passengers, I refer you to a recent experience of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

They have put air-conditioned express buses into service on the new section of the Massachusetts Turnpike between the suburb of Newton Corner and downtown Boston.

Within one month, these buses - which make the run in 17 minutes - had more than doubled their passenger count and last week the Authority doubled its equipment on the run.

These new transit riders came from automobiles.

The nearby rapid rail transit line felt no effect at all.

Another major change in transit must come in equipment.

I do not know the condition of every one of the 50,000 buses in the United States.

But I know the condition of one that runs near my house.

It is ancient, it smokes, it rattles and it is obviously beyond the help of a new coat of paint because it does not have one.

Under the Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has made millions of dollars in grants for new equipment.

The National Academy of Sciences is working on criteria for design of what is officially called a Non-Rail Transit vehicle, which may strike you as a hard way to say bus.

By January 28, the Academy is expected to produce an inventory of the design factors that will produce a better transit vehicle and of the technical capabilities required to build it.

In its deliberations, the Academy might well consider a design which would permit the vehicle to be used for carrying cargo between peak hours.

Many airlines already have developed quick-change jets which carry passengers by day and freight by night.

It should be possible to design a transit vehicle that would perform the same double duty in and around our cities.

Even if the market for such service took only a fraction of the 50 to 75 per cent of your buses that are idle between rush hours, it would help pay for the investment which the transit industry must make in new equipment.

We are prepared to work with you in market research, an area which needs a great deal more attention from the transit industry.

Some of this has been done under Federal grants recently - experiments with different kinds of service to see what attracts new riders and what does not.

Unfortunately, these experiments were spread rather thin and in many cases were not carried over long enough periods to produce reliable information about public reaction to them.

Our experiments with the high-speed trains in the Northeast Corridor, for example, are fundamentally market research.

The trains have been built, the track has been improved and the service will be heavily advertised primarily to determine whether people will ride fast trains over intermediate distances.

We plan to continue the service for two years before we even begin to evaluate the results.

We do not believe anything less gives the product a fair test.

We are calling for research proposals today on a subject that is closely identified with one of our hosts here today, Robert Sommerville.

We are asking for bids on the first step of a study of free transit.

Mr. Sommerville is a persuasive man.

His analogy between elevators which provide free transportation in buildings as a cost of doing business and surface vehicles is a persuasive one.

This will not be a quick study.

The first contract will be for no more than facts and figures which we can then analyze to see whether the idea merits further study.

But at least we are going to take a serious look at it.

Let me emphasize, however, that a free ride will not be enough to attract people to buses unless they are fast, comfortable and convenient.

Every study shows that cost is low on the list of items that people regard as important when they are considering mass transit as a means of moving through a city.

The Department of Transportation looks at the transit industry as the best means immediately at hand for solving the problem of peak hour commuting and downtown congestion.

It could help us relieve congestion at airports.

It is essential to more efficient use of our present highway network and for any future achievement of a balanced mix of transportation.

Unlike many of your stockholders, we do not believe the transit industry has reached a point of no return.

There is a need for your services and a market for your product and we will provide as much research, system analysis, planning and financial assistance as we can.

But this cannot and will not be a monolithic Federal effort.

Much of the future of your industry depends on how vigorously you press your case now with state and local governments.

The job is not an easy one.

But the rewards for doing it well could be, among other things, the saving of America's cities.

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