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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
ALAN S. BOYD BEFORE THE ANNUAL BANQUET MEETING OF THE SOCIETY  
OF AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AT COBO HALL, DETROIT, MICHIGAN,  
JANUARY 10, 1968, at 7:30 P. M.

The Federal Highway Administration did some original research for the occasion tonight and you may be interested in one of the items it produced. It appears there are really two good reasons for painting double lines in the middle of the road. One is to separate oncoming lines of traffic. The other is to show me where to stand when I talk to Detroit engineers about urban transportation problems.

I am encouraged, however, by the fact that you have taken Dr. Haddon into the Society. I take it as a sign that we are going to continue a long and useful association in the public interest. I know the doctor is proud to be a member. He has a sign on his door that reads: "William Haddon meets S. A. E. specifications."

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of us at the Department for the help you have given him in his difficult mission. Thanks from government are not new to your Society. The work you have done on air pollution and on aircraft noise abatement is deeply appreciated. As was your first venture into public service during World War I when you designed a truck for the Army. You obviously designed it to last. I am sure that a number of those trucks are still on the road - disguised as commute buses.

So I think it is time to suggest another design project for you. We need better systems of mass transit service and new kinds of buses to help us solve some of our rush-hour problems - give the commuter some travel alternatives and at the same time allow us to make more efficient use of our streets and highways.

There is a song from a Broadway show of a dozen years ago that pretty well describes the way the Department feels about the future of the bus. The show was "Pipe Dream," which I hope has no significance in this case, and the song was about what the players called their "lopsided, ramshackle bus." At one point they sing:

"When the engine won't work; and it's going berserk;  
and we're near the end of our rope.

"We fix up the thing; with an old piece of string;  
and our hearts get lousy with hope."

That pretty well describes the condition of the hearts at the Department of Transportation when we think of the bus and of the fact that it can carry up to ten times as many people over a lane of road at rush hour as the automobile.

Unfortunately, much of what is written about the city bus system is true. It is often slow and cumbersome and the same bus design must serve in a variety of situations, some of which it fits well and some of which it fits not at all.

In this country, the automobile is the yardstick for comfort, convenience, trip time and availability, and few mass transit systems measure up in these respects.

So I come here tonight to this hall filled with the talented men who are designing airplanes that very nearly outrace the sun; the men who have created a system to put man on the moon; who have given the people of America mobility unmatched in the world. And I say: Where is our dream bus system?

A better bus system, of course, is only one of the things we need. Our mandate from President Johnson and the Congress is to produce a coordinated system of transportation. As the President said in his message to Congress asking for creation of the Department: We need a "coordinated transportation system that permits travelers and goods to move conveniently and efficiently from one means of transportation to another, using the best characteristics of each." We have no such system today. America's transportation network, as the President pointed out, did not spring "from a single drawing board," but grew piecemeal along with the rest of American industry, following opportunity, serving success and going down with failure. The Federal government's own policies have contributed to the lack of coordination, unfortunately. Our transportation network is a combination of public and private enterprise - with private automobiles and trucks using public highways; private airplanes operating from public terminals and public runways; with barges and towboats moving on public waterways. But the public network no more came from a single drawing board than the private. And it has at one time favored the railroads, at another, the highway, and again, the airport, with no long-range planning and no attempt to estimate the consequences of investment.

We hope to change that - to bring order to the network and to help industry perform the research into new techniques and new technology that will produce a true system of transportation for the United States.

There are two phrases in President Johnson's historic transportation message that point the direction for us.

One gives us the responsibility for bringing new technology to a "total transportation system, by promoting research and development in cooperation with private industry."

The other directs the Department to "develop investment criteria and standards, and analytical techniques to assist all levels of government and industry in their transportation investments."

In following these guidelines, we will approach investments in highways, airports, waterways and other staples of transportation not as unrelated expenditures but as parts of the total investment. We will measure the consequences of investment not in terms of benefits for transportation alone but also in terms of benefits for the traveler, for the shipper of goods, and for the total economy.

The same guidelines will influence our planning so that I hope we are nearing the day when no airport will be approved without adequate access roads being considered as essential as an adequate control tower; when no highway system will be designed without making full allowance for the potential of mass transit to carry part of the load.

A decade ago, that would have been a rather arrogant way to talk about anything as incredibly complex as America's transportation system. Perhaps it is still too early to be that self-assured about our technical ability without hedging. But we are at the threshold of a new era of technology - one in which the talents of science and of the humanities are united in ways never before possible. We are capable, I believe, of achieving nearly any technical goal we set for ourselves - given money and the allocation of skill. There is, and probably always will be, the danger of creating technologies that will master us rather than serve us. But that danger is as old as the discovery of fire. And I am confident that we will continue to place human needs above those of the machine - to improve the world of man rather than imprison him in it.

I find the prospect a challenging one. I believe our society is prepared to turn the talents of this working partnership of the physical and social sciences toward problems that have remained unsolved or half-solved for centuries. And I look forward to participating in the work as it applies to resolving some of the conflicts that exist between transportation and the environment.

There are four areas that share high priority for the Department and I would like to discuss those briefly with you tonight.

One, of course, is safety.

Our task here is to work with the transportation industry to minimize the risks of travel in all forms of transportation. Without your best effort, it is a job we can never hope to carry out. I am sure you feel the same way. And I am sure your response to the challenge of safety is one of the major reasons for the automobile safety record of the year just past.

The National Safety Council figures for the first 11 months of 1967 show an absolute decrease in the number of traffic deaths for the first time in many years. We anticipate this record will stand up for the entire year, although the December figures are not yet in. The decrease is small, to be sure. But it was achieved along with an increase of some 35-billion passenger miles. The figures are incomplete. We cannot be very precise about why the pattern of annual increases broke in 1967. We cannot even say that it will not return again in 1968. But we can assume that the efforts of all government, of industry, of private safety campaigns and of all others who worked for safer driving are beginning to show results.

The break in the trend does not mean we can now let down. This is not like a football game with a tidy beginning and end. It is a problem we may never completely resolve - a game we play forever in sudden death overtime. But a game we must try to win.

Automobile safety is the most pervasive of our safety missions, but we are at work on other programs as well. We are experimenting with new methods of cutting down on grade crossing accidents until the day when they can be eliminated. We are designing a stronger air traffic control system, one that will maintain our present excellent record of safe flying not only now but in the more difficult years to come - the years just a decade away when one-million Americans will board a commercial plane every day.

A second area of concern is one that can best be described as an effort to expedite everything. Each time cargo sits at the end of a subsonic flight while it waits for a truck to come through a traffic jam to get it, the cost of doing business goes up. When a plane circles for half-an-hour waiting for clearance to land and then sits for another half-hour waiting for a place to unload, the cost of doing business goes up. Each time a tractor-trailer makes 95 per cent of its run at 60-miles-an-hour and the last five per cent at three miles an hour, the cost of doing business goes up. And when the cost of paperwork in the import-export business is ten per cent of the gross - and that is the present average - you have a hidden cost of transportation that is absurdly high.

We have a joint government-industry committee working to cut down on paperwork and red tape in transportation. And our researchers are giving top priority to the search for better methods of accomplishing the transfers of goods from one form of transportation to another.

A third area of concentration is in hard research. We are preparing to start train service between New York and Washington at speeds up to 120 miles an hour in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Railroad. We are testing a train with a jet engine for service between New York and Boston. We have a contract for construction of the largest linear-induction motor ever built, a motor we hope to test with a tracked-air-cushion vehicle which should be capable of speeds up to 250 miles an hour over relatively inexpensive roadbeds.

Finally, we are working on new techniques for improving transportation in and around our cities which will, at the same time, diminish some of the detrimental side effects.

I suppose our biggest difficulty lies in the fact that some of you gentlemen have moved out too far ahead of us. You are able to design and build machines that we cannot yet cope with.

You build jet engines that deliver 18,000 pounds of thrust **each** and push 150 people across the country in a little more than four hours. But we have not yet discovered a way to effectively zone corridors over which these planes can land and take off without rattling windows and turning television sets to jelly.

You have already put Americans into nearly 100-million cars, trucks and buses and we are still trying to discover just how they ought to be kept moving in and around the cities.

I think one problem is that we have not yet resigned ourselves to the fact that transportation must be carefully built into the basic design of the city, just as an elevator is part of the very blueprint of a building. It is a rare architect who designs a building and then tells the contractor to nail on some elevators as best he can. Yet that is precisely how we go about expanding and rebuilding our cities and suburbs. Sometimes, we reverse the procedure. We design great elevators and nail buildings around them. We go blithely along tearing down old buildings and putting new ones in their place with double the floor space of the old; yet with no provision made to double the capacity of the transportation system which must get people to and from the new building.

When it comes to transportation, also, Americans are still too much like a track team that spends all of its time in training trying to beat the four-minute mile, ignoring the fact that most of the medals are given for short dashes. We have simply never concentrated enough money and effort on the trips that fall between supersonic flight and a walk around the block.

Then, too, I think the extremism that marks so much public debate these days has taken over too much of the discussion of urban transportation. It has gotten to the point where an attempt at dialogue often does more harm than good.

You have heard it happen, I am sure. A man who questions the need for a particular section of freeway is attacked for caring more about bugs and bunnies than about people. A man who insists that certain freeways are essential is written off as a compulsive concrete mixer who won't be satisfied until we are paved from border-to-border.

The Bureau of Public Roads estimates conservatively that there will be 156-million automobiles in this country in a little over 20 years. That is twice as many as we have now, but other estimates run much higher. If, for example, we continue to buy automobiles at the rate we have bought them since 1930, we will have nearly 200-million by 1990 and could have 350-million by the year 2000. Unless we stop buying cars tomorrow, we are going to need new highways. We will need them, in fact, even if we never manufacture another car. There is no question of need. The only questions are: how many miles and lanes of surface and where; and what they ought to look like.

To show you the absurdity of labels in this debate, let me quote some testimony before the Senate Public Works Committee.

The witness said he thinks "our urban experts must be involved in every aspect of preliminary route planning." He said the "route must not be disruptive to communal patterns." He said he could see no reason why freeways that go through cities should be built to the same massive 65-mile-an-hour specifications that are required in the Panhandle.

I confess that bothers me, too, and we are conducting studies into the feasibility of different standards for urban freeways and rural freeways.

And, finally, the witness said "the freeway system should be a part of an overall regional transportation system which will provide optimum utilization of all modes of transportation with particular emphasis upon an integrated mass Rapid Transit system."

There are partisans who would automatically label this unknown witness either as an official of the Sierra Club or a rail transit lobbyist. Actually, he is Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles, a city that could not survive without the freeways it already has and cannot survive without more - a fact of which the mayor is well aware.

So I think it is obvious that the debate over freeways must be conducted more on fact and less on emotion. The people engaged in the debate must spend more time at each other's charts and less time at each other's throats. We have an outstanding highway system in the United States. We have the capacity to use it as a foundation for even better highways in the future. That is where the debate should center.

It should center, for example, on precisely how we go about altering street patterns to let the bus get by. The Federal Highway Administration already has offered financial and technical assistance for experiments with reserved lanes or metered lanes on freeways.

We are working with Seattle on a program for special ramps that will help buses shake the city traffic faster and get onto the highway where it can make better time. And I think that when I get back to Washington and the registered letter arrives from Joe Gilbert saying you are ready to help us design a better bus system, one of our major problems will be solved.

The work which lies ahead of the Department of Transportation will take effort bordering on drudgery. As in your business, it will require many trips back to the old drawing board. Many people have an impression that the Department was created because it had all the answers. Actually, it was put together to look for them. And no matter how you traveled to this convention, I am sure that many of you had experiences that make it clear we have not yet found all of the answers.

There is no question in my mind that the most pressing problems America faces are in its cities. They are problems of schools, of decent housing, of open space and clean air and water, of poverty and a broad enough tax base. They add up to a single question of the very ability of the cities to survive. President Johnson has given these problems his most urgent attention. The cities of America now have available to them a range of programs of financial aid and technical assistance which give many of them their first real chance to solve these problems.

I believe that transportation is as important as any of the problems of the cities. And I believe we have a fighting chance to solve them - given time, hard work and the kind of first rate help we have come to count on from people like the members of the Society of Automotive Engineers.

Thank you.

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