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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, ALAN S. BOYD, BEFORE
THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN TRANSPORTATION
AT THE PITTSBURGH HILTON HOTEL, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 1968, AT 4:20 P.M.

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi - "So Go the Glories of the
World" - that's the way the old saying went. Until last
week, when it took off in a different direction.

The last page of last week's Life Magazine features a
pictorial essay entitled "Awaiting the Sic Transit." The
scene is a bus stop. A Londoner, carrying a large sign,
bends over to peer at a bus schedule attached to a lamp
post. "Times of Last Busses" is the heading on the schedule.
The Londoner's sign reads: "The End of the World is at Hand."

But that was only the beginning

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Last week the Wall Street Journal treated its readers to a front-page account of a rare and wonderful experience that few modern Americans have ever enjoyed: an intercity train ride that didn't make you feel like you'd gone through a wringer.

The reporter was talking about the Tokaido Line in Japan. And he didn't resist the obvious invidious comparisons.

Indeed, his description of the delights of his Tokaido ride reminded me of another account I came across recently - an account that goes like this:

"I can conceive of nothing so completely fulfilling in every respect the requirements of our population as such a road. . . There would be no dust. There would be no mud. . . /People/ have simply to enter the station from the sidewalk and pass down a spacious and well-lighted staircase to a dry and roomy platform. The temperature would be cool in summer and warm in winter. . . The passenger would be sure of a luxurious seat in a well-lighted car. . . ."

This was the inviting vision advanced more than a hundred years ago by an engineer named A. P. Robinson of a subway he was proposing under Broadway in New York City.

I cite these more as instructive examples than unpleasant reminders - more as random signposts of how far we have to go than as telltale symptoms of how far gone we are toward developing in this country a transportation system really worthy of the name.

We haven't gotten there yet. But we are, I think, beginning for the first time to take the right track.

For the first time, we are seeing the so-called transportation crisis for what it really is - part and parcel of the complex and chronic problems that affect all of our cities.

Americans have worked very hard for the past two centuries building the most advanced industrial society known to man. But about 30 years ago, we began to look around at the cities we had created in the process and said, this is not exactly what we had in mind. It needs more parks and trees. Too many of the people live in squalor. The schools teach, but

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too many do not educate. What's more, they said, the bus service is terrible. The streets are too crowded. The air is not safe to breathe. And all in all, it's a place we'd rather leave than live in.

So we decided some time ago that we had to do something to make our cities places where men could live and work and thrive.

And we started arguing about it. We haven't stopped arguing - but we no longer let our arguing stop us from doing something about it.

Under President Johnson's leadership we have made great beginnings over the past several years.

We have entered into massive efforts to improve our schools and train more and better teachers.

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

We have stepped up slum clearance and revitalization of decaying neighborhoods and the creation of more parks.

The President's program represents the most far-reaching attempt in modern history to save, not just the cities, but the people who live and work there.

The establishment last year of the Department of Transportation was a crucial part of that effort.

Over the last few weeks, the President has moved to expand and advance that effort even more.

In his recent message to the Congress on housing and the cities, the President called the nation to an even broader and bolder effort to "change the face of our cities and to end the fear of those - rich and poor alike - who call them home."

As part of that effort, he asked the Congress to approve a reorganization plan.

"-transferring to the Department of Transportation the major urban transit grant, loan, and related research functions now in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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"-maintaining in the Department of Housing and Urban Development the leadership in comprehensive planning at the local level, that includes transportation planning and relates to broader urban development objectives."

With Congressional approval of this plan, the Federal government will be far more effectively organized to help our cities develop transportation systems that serve their total needs.

This does not mean we will now be able to come up with some all-purpose plan for the solution of our urban ills - in transportation or in any other field.

We cannot tell the cities where to go, or how to grow or what to build. That they must decide for themselves. But we can help them choose among the best ways of doing it.

Before a city can decide what kind of transportation system it needs, it must decide what kind of city it wants to be. It must decide what kind of life and work and recreation it wants to offer its people.

And the key word here is people.

We have any number of highways that move many vehicles, but not very many people.

We have built cities with space for highways, and skyscrapers and cars - but not enough space for people.

It is, I grant you, an oversimplification to suggest - as some have - that we may well reach a point in some cities, one of these days, when we must choose between people and pavement.

But perhaps - in times as complex as these - it is necessary to talk in terms of simple, basic facts now and then.

The simplest - and most surpassing - fact is that cities are for people. Or at least they're supposed to be. And transportation is for people. Or at least it ought to be.

In today's world - even more in tomorrow's - any urban transportation system designed to do no more than move people and products from place to place is a failure, no matter how magnificently it performs that function. Because if

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that is all it is designed to do, there is always the danger that it will do as much harm as good.

In the first - and final - analysis transportation must be designed to serve the total needs of people.

We have in the past given a great deal of lip service to this notion. We have even granted it some secondary consideration now and then in the building of our transportation plant.

But we have never acted as if we really believed it.

It is time we did.

This means, of course, that our urban areas are going to have to make some decisions - they are going to have to decide how large they want to grow, in what directions and ways they want to grow, and so on.

It means that we are going to have to stop making transportation decisions by default. Transportation is one of the great choice mechanisms of our society. In the past we have, in effect, exercised our choice without knowing it - buying automobiles and building highways without really being aware of many of the implications of these decisions.

We can no longer leave these decisions merely to the marketplace - or to technicians. We build highways that are the technical superiors to any in the world. Our highway people also have the ability to build roads that serve the broader needs of the community - as they are beginning to demonstrate. But they cannot do that on their own, we must tell them what the broader goals are and support them as they work to achieve those goals.

It is also time we stopped measuring the success or failure of our urban transportation systems in absolute terms - in terms of a life-and-death struggle between one mode and another in which the winner takes all and everybody else loses.

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It is time we started remembering that autos and highways are not inherently evil and inhuman any more than mass transit is inevitably the most uncomfortable and inconvenient way to go since the days of the prairie schooner and the overland stage.

It is time we stopped leaving social and human costs out of our calculations in considering the costs of our transportation systems. Those things that our calculations cannot comprehend are most often the most important - precisely because they are incalculable and cannot be reduced to a formula or a diget.

I take it as axiomatic that those things least liable to precise measurement are often those that must place highest in any adequate set of human priorities.

It is also time we recognized that - in developing urban transportation systems as in rebuilding our urban areas - we have to start where we are with what we have.

We have far too great a tendency to look at the cities - and transportation systems - we have now and those we will have tomorrow as totally different. We tend to view the cities and transportation systems of tomorrow in utterly visionary terms, as the creation of some totally new technology whose magic machinery, once set in motion, will totally transform our urban scene.

We tend to forget that not suddenly, but slowly - only after gradual, grueling effort - will tomorrow's cities emerge. And they will be no more and no less than all we have done, or failed to do to improve the cities of today. We will, of course, also build new cities and communities - and in doing so avoid the mistakes we made in building the old. But whatever it is that we're going, we've got to get there from here.

The scientists tell us that if you ask the right questions in the right way they answer themselves. They also tell us that the way things look to us depends entirely on the way we look at them - on our focus and our perspective.

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We are beginning to really look at our cities for the first time - and for the first time to see them for what they really are or ought to be: systems for supporting and sustaining man in his pursuit of a full and free life.

And the job of an urban transportation system is to help the city serve that purpose.

I think we have a long way to go before we can really say we have in this country urban transportation systems that do their job.

But I think we are on the way.

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