

(8)

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ALAN S. BOYD, BEFORE THE DENVER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
MAIN BALLROOM, DENVER HILTON HOTEL, DENVER, COLORADO,
12:00 NOON, FRIDAY, MAY 10, 1968

Before the days of television and jets, it was not uncommon for people in the Midwest to grow up and pass their lives without ever seeing an ocean.

But, while we don't hear very much about them, there were also those who grew up - and over the hill - without ever seeing a mountain.

So the one group, I imagine, thought of the ocean as sort of a wet prairie - and the other thought of a mountain as kind of a dry tidal wave.

I was born and raised in Florida. And a good deal of my youth had gone before I saw some real mountains. At least I thought they were real - until I came to Colorado.

Nowadays, everybody knows that nobody's ever really seen a mountain who hasn't been to Colorado - or ever really seen an ocean who hasn't been to Florida.

So, in this political season, I feel pretty safe in saying that everybody who doesn't vacation in Florida this year will vacation here in Colorado.

I'm not, unfortunately, here on vacation, but I've always considered a business trip to Denver better than a vacation trip to most other cities - and I'm awfully glad to be here.

We have come a long way - in this country and in this city - since the days when, in a good many places, there was no more reliable, efficient and economical form of transportation than that sulkiest of sopranos, the Rocky Mountain canary - known to the more pedestrian among us as the burro.

Yet pedestrians and motorists alike - in some of our more densely populated urban areas - would give a lot for some form of transportation as good as the burro was, or even for a burro itself.

It isn't that we haven't made tremendous strides in transportation in the last half century or so. The problem is that - unlike our Olympic teams of recent decades - we have performed spectacularly in the long-distance events, and poorly in the dashes and the relays.

We aren't the first nation in history to have that problem. The Romans were as famous for their vast road system as we are for our Interstate Highway System. The trouble was that all roads did, in fact, lead to Rome - and the resulting traffic congestion on Roman streets was so bad that, in 44 BC, Julius Caesar banned all private traffic from city streets during the daylight hours.

But the Romans had relatively simple transportation systems to deal with - no internal combustion engines, no airports and - unless you want to count the aqueducts - no pipelines. In our time, not all of our transportation problems are caused by congestion; nor do they all have wheels on them.

For example, President Johnson has proposed a comprehensive program of safety standards for the transmission and distribution of natural gas. The Senate, last year, passed a bill which would accomplish most of the action requested by the President.

But the House has not yet responded in a similar fashion. Indeed, the first step taken last week by the House Commerce Committee repudiated what the President had requested and what the Senate had already done.

The bill which has been proposed by the House Commerce Committee is worse than an empty gesture. It is a dangerous deception.

It would be bad enough if the bill simply failed to provide protection for the public. But it goes beyond failure to encouraging violation of the very standards we believe are essential for that protection.

There are some 800,000 miles of gas pipeline of varying sizes and capacity already in the ground. And another 30,000 miles will be constructed this year. The net effect of the House bill as it now stands, will prevent any effective regulation of the 800,000 miles already under ground and allow only token regulation of what will be constructed this year.

Potentially, the most dangerous transportation of natural gas is through the miles of pipe beneath our city streets. Some of that pipe has been in use for better than a century. Most of the pipe has been in the ground for at least a decade.

Yet, state and municipal regulation of such pipeline is minimal. And what regulation there is does not utilize the latest technology in testing, maintenance and repair or replacement. Yet the House bill would prohibit any effective reform of such regulation.

The bill calls for a system of enforcement which not only would be ineffective but would represent a continuing invitation to violate whatever standards that are imposed. Under the penalty section of this bill, a violator will first be given notice of his violation and then will be given an opportunity to come into compliance before any penalties can be levied.

This system of enforcement would be unique in Federal regulation; and I believe would be almost unheard of in most state and municipal regulation.

A man could know that he was deliberately not complying with a standard with the full knowledge that the only sanction he faced would be notice of violation and a demand that he come into compliance. Only after failing to observe that notice could he be fined for continued non-compliance.

These are just two of the major deficiencies which are now present in the bill reported by the House Commerce Committee.

Fortunately there were a sizeable number of members on the Committee who tried to undo the mischief that had been done. They have indicated their intent to carry those efforts to the floor of the full House. I have told them that I will do everything that is legally within my power to assist their efforts.

It has always been my view that there is one thing worse than legislative refusal to meet a serious problem - that is a legislative response which is meaningless.

The bill which has passed the House Commerce Committee will be held out to the public as a protective measure. The truth is there is no protection in it.

Returning to the problems of urban congestion, I have not yet heard anyone seriously suggest so radical a solution to our transportation problems as Julius Caesar imposed. But it is no longer surprising to come across proposals from some of our more respected and desperate urbanologists that call for the total or partial ban of the private automobile from central city streets.

If such proposals seem both extreme and unwarranted - and I am convinced they are - let me assure you they become, at least, more understandable the more you encounter, as I do, those interests and attitudes that refuse even to consider any solutions except more of the same.

What, then, is the problem - and what can we do about it?

A good place to start, I think, is with the recognition that in most American cities for the foreseeable future the predominant form of transportation will continue to be rubber over roads.

The question is: Will these be roads to eventual urban ruin, or roads to urban restoration and revitalization?

I need not detail before this informed audience the difficulties so many of our urban areas have had over the past ten years or so in trying to accommodate the automobile.

In the words of one observer, "...every major city in the United States has suffered major disasters at the hands of freeways whose only planned function was to move traffic, without concern for other values."

As a result, we are coming to realize, in city after city across the country that freeways do more than move us about - they also help to mold the very shape and form of our cities.

We have reached the point where we can no longer ignore the fact that the price of allowing the automobile free rein in our cities - at the expense of other values and means and considerations - may well be higher than we want to pay. For, it is a price that must invariably include not only the irreversible erosion of urban areas themselves but the inevitable loss of those very qualities of convenience and freedom that attract us to the automobile in the first place.

I am not suggesting that this is the only choice we have - an absolute choice between either the automobile or the city, between either the automobile or some other means of transportation.

What I do suggest is that this is the only choice we will end up with if we follow the advice of those who would have us meet the transportation needs of our urban areas by an essentially unlimited and open-ended process of accommodation to the automobile.

What I do suggest is that the time has come - in our urban areas - to temper our romance with the automobile with a strong dose of reality.

Reality, of course, also requires that we recognize the rather pathetic state and severe limitations of existing alternatives to the automobile.

But we must also recognize that the reason most Americans have so little choice is because - neither at the public nor the private level have we spent anywhere near the time, money or imagination that we have lavished on automobiles.

As I have suggested, the answer is not to forget about automobiles and highways and focus all our energies and our funds on alternative modes of transportation.

The answer, instead, is to forget all about this narrowly modal approach to transportation - in which one mode serves only at the expense and to the exclusion of the others - and start focussing on transportation as a system, made up of interdependent modes, whose job is to serve the city in which it operates and the people who live there.

The answer is to start talking and thinking and dealing with transportation in terms of people and in terms of cities - for it is people that transportation is designed to serve, by giving them access to all the opportunities that cities alone can supply.

And that means that when we talk about transportation we talk about all the problems people have in cities.

It means:

-- First, that each urban area itself must decide what kind of transportation system best serves and suits its particular needs. Obviously, the system that works best in Pittsburgh or Denver is not likely to be the system that works best in New York or Los Angeles.

-- Second, that we look at our various transportation modes as mutually inclusive rather than mutually exclusive. We have to stop thinking of alternatives in the sense of one mode or another and start thinking of alternatives in terms of varying combinations of modes.

-- Third, that we evaluate alternative transportation systems, not in narrowly economic or engineering terms, but in terms of the total urban environment in which they operate and which they so deeply affect. Transportation, we are beginning to realize, exerts as powerful and pervasive an influence upon the way we live as it does upon the air we breathe. It enables the affluent to enjoy the blessings of suburban living and convenient access to all the services of the city without really paying for it. But that same pattern of life condemns the poor to the inner city and cuts them off from access to the jobs and other opportunities they must have to earn a decent living and live a decent life.

My Department is engaged in hundreds of programs and projects and investigations to help our urban areas approach their transportation problems in terms of their total needs. But we can do no more than help.

Each urban area must decide for itself what kind of transportation system best suits its needs. And before it can decide that it must decide what kind of city it wants to be, how it wants to grow and what shape it wants to take.

We are encouraging the cities to make these kinds of decisions. We are aiding them in their efforts to develop systems that serve their total needs - witness our support of so-called "design concept" teams in Baltimore and Chicago.

Let me - at this point - acknowledge, with admiration and applause, the proposal sent to me over a month ago by your Mayor, Tom Currigan, for an integrated transportation and urban design study in the Denver metropolitan area. We still have the details of that proposal under study, and it is too early for me to say what final response we can or will make. But I can say that its aims and objectives have our unqualified endorsement. And I can assure you that we want to help in any way we can.

We are fully aware of the handicaps under which most of our urban areas labor - the overlapping and obsolete jurisdictions, the lack of funds, and so forth, which increasingly impede their efforts to cope with the incredibly difficult problems before them.

We are also fully aware - in transportation and other fields - Federal policies must bear some of the blame for creating these problems as well as compounding some of your difficulties in dealing with them.

The Federal government, for example, has at one and the same time established programs to rebuild and restore our central cities and programs that have contributed to their decay and decline.

We are moving, in the field of transportation at least, toward more comprehensive and better coordinated Federal-aid programs. The authorization by Congress - just a few days ago - of the transfer to the Department of Transportation of the Urban Mass Transit Administration is a step in that direction.

But we do have a long way to go before we can say that our Federal programs are so structured and shaped that they respond as fully and as flexibly as they should to the needs of our urban areas.

Currently, for example, our transportation demonstration programs are designed to deal mainly with individual pieces of hardware rather than with systems and to serve very broad rather than very particular needs. And they have a way sometimes of being applicable everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.

We may well want to consider a radical revision of our whole approach to demonstration grants - a revision that would enable them to serve both more inclusive and more unique purposes, both more comprehensive and more concrete needs.

The approach I have in mind would, for the first time, permit cities - backed by Federal assistance and free from rigid program categorization - to define and attack their most urgent transportation problems as they interpret them at the local level.

Today, by contrast, city mayors are severely restricted in what they can do with Federal transportation aid. Billions of dollars are available for urban streets and freeways and a few million dollars are available for mass transit. Yet freeways and mass transit are only two ways of dealing with just a few urban transportation needs.

A city may well decide, for example, that it requires - not new highways or mass transit - but more fringe parking, or better airport access, or a new computerized traffic control

system, or street grade separation, and so forth. But today no Federal money is available for any of these purposes. As a result, our city mayors all too often find themselves restricted to Federal transportation programs with little relevance to their most urgent transportation problems.

The approach I suggest would make grants available to meet urban transportation problems in almost any way - however novel - that bears a rational relationship to a city's overall transportation planning. It would, as I envision it, help our cities meet their immediate needs as well as improve their comprehensive transportation system planning.

This is but one way in which we - at the Federal level - can make our programs much more responsive to the real needs of our cities.

And those needs are urgent - in transportation, in education, in employment, in every aspect of urban life.

But while Federal efforts can aid immensely by responding to urban needs, they can only aid - they can only encourage.

The President has said it best: "The challenge of changing the face of the city and the men who live there summons us all - the President and the Congress, Governors and Mayors. The challenge reaches as well into every corporate board room, university, and union headquarters in America. It extends to church and community groups, and to the family itself. The problem is so vast that the answer can only be forged by responsible leadership from every sector, public and private.

"We dare not fail to answer - loud and clear."

#