

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 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION WEEK FOR THE
STATE OF KENTUCKY DINNER AT THE FLAG ROOM OF THE KENTUCKY HOTEL,
IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY ON TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1968, 7:30 P.M.

I'm delighted to be here today - happy but a little uneasy. It's National Transportation Week and here I am in Kentucky - practically in the shadow of Churchill Downs - and I have no firm pronouncements on Kentucky's most famous transportation product. The fact is the Department of Transportation has no Bureau of Equine Affairs. By the way things are going, this may change. Some New York traffic experts tell us that in 1911 during the horse and carriage days, traffic moved along New York streets at an average speed of about 11 1/2 miles per hour. Last year, New York City traffic was averaging about 8 miles per hour.

Your good city of Louisville is an old hand at transportation. It owes its origin to river traffic. And once the hazard of the Falls was circumvented, you went on to become a major river port, later a busy railroad center and more recently a trucking hub. But it is your effort to resolve a very contemporary - and very common - transportation problem that we in the Department of Transportation are watching most closely today.

The origin of that problem is found in the transportation statistics of Jefferson County - in the decreases shown in public transit usage. What impressed me is the close similarity of your difficulties with those of other cities. I noted the sharpness of the problem in the public transit figures for 1954 and 1955 with an average decrease of around 10 percent. Then in 1956 came the inevitable fare increase and transit passengers decreased 16 percent. And all during this time, the number of cars registered in Jefferson County kept growing and growing - for a total increase of about 50 percent in 10 years. In consequence, we find that of all the trips made by persons today in the Louisville area, only 6 percent are made in your public transit. And so like other cities, you are looking to ways to increase the capacity of your city streets and boulevards.

We firmly support these studies. We have, in fact, made provisions for similar programs in other cities an important part of our new highway bill now before the Congress.

Our interest here came from our work with a number of cities - work in trying to see whether we could break up traffic jams without costly new expressway systems.

Under a program called TOPICS, we are working to improve traffic signals; add left-turn lanes to prevent cars from having to line up waiting for one car to turn left; build pedestrian overpasses; and create special turn-out areas where trucks can load and unload.

We are helping cities create special lanes for buses so that they can load and unload passengers without blocking the movement of cars; and so they can keep moving along the streets without getting caught in the automobile traffic.

All of these steps are based on the theory that our city streets can be used more efficiently than they now are.

So far, the tests show that with relatively inexpensive improvements in the street system, the capacity of the streets can be increased by 15 to 25 percent and the flow of traffic speeded up by a like amount. With such a program, for example, you might be able to turn a boulevard into a mini-freeway by tunneling under every fifth cross-street and by having electrically-operated barriers close off the other cross-streets during rush-hour.

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We are now persuaded that this improvement program merits large-scale investment. And our bill proposes to authorize \$250 million a year in matching funds for such work. This would double the amount of Federal money now available for use in urban areas on other than Interstate roads.

Our support for the TOPICS program came out of our reflections during our first year's work as a Department. As you know, the Congress responded to President Johnson's request to establish a Department of Transportation on April 1 of last year. And ever since Congress gave us the green light, people have been honking their horns at us.

While we did not exactly make the tires squeal when the light turned green, we have begun to move.

It did not take us long to discover that no matter how challenging were the problems in other fields of transportation, none could match the challenge of moving people and goods in America's cities and their suburbs.

And so, during the past year, the Department has given a high priority to the problems of transportation in the metropolitan areas.

Our efforts in city transportation improvement will go into high gear with the transfer of the Federal Government's programs in urban mass transportation to our Department. We shall have - for the first time in the country's history - a coordinated approach to city transportation. Highway planning and mass transit planning will be able to proceed side-by-side and we will have a good chance - again for the first time - to produce the mixture that is required to make it easier to move in metropolitan areas.

I shall, in order to have a first hand view of our cities' transportation problems, start a study tour of several big Eastern cities tomorrow. I shall be meeting with Mayors and their transportation specialists and I'll be touring their metropolitan areas to learn both how they have met their transportation needs and to learn what transportation problems are still unsolved. Reports and statistics are fine but there is no substitute for an on-the-spot look at city problems.

Automobiles and highways are only two of the transportation problems of the cities, but it is on these that we have concentrated in a major bill now before the Congress. The bill is not ours, alone, much as we would like to claim it. The bill reflects months and years of study and thought by the Congress, by the highway engineers, by architects, and city planners - by everyone concerned with the relation between transportation and the city.

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And I believe it reflects, also, some of the changing values of our society - the realization that cities exist to serve people and that transportation exists to serve both.

When President Johnson asked for a Department of Transportation, he emphasized that future planning for highways or for any other form of transportation should reach beyond the economics of transportation alone. He made it clear that such planning should encompass not only all transportation needs but also the environment in which those needs exist.

The new highway bill is written to carry out that mandate.

Fundamentally, we are asking the Congress to authorize the expenditure of several billions of dollars for Federal aid for highway construction. But the most significant thing about the bill is not the money but the way in which we propose to spend it.

The largest share of the money will be used to finance the completion of the Interstate Highway System. About 6,000 miles of that system is planned for urban areas. But much of that mileage is unbuilt. In city after city, progress on the Interstate system has either slowed to a rush-hour pace or stopped altogether. The last miles are, indeed, proving to be the longest.

The fact is that these city highways are not being built because in most American metropolitan areas the people have asked for a second look at the way we build urban highways. They have not been built because too many people question whether the merit of a transportation system can be judged solely by the speed of the journey it provides. They insist we take into account the noise it generates; the pollution it puts into the air; the number of neighborhoods it shakes up; the impact it has on the appearance of the city.

This explains the reasoning behind our TOPICS program - our efforts to increase the capacity of existing throughfares. This appears to us to be a very productive undertaking.

We propose - again for the first time - to provide Federal funds for building parking spaces outside the central business district. We propose to pay 75 percent of the cost of fringe parking if it is built to tie in with a mass transit system that would cover the downtown area.

We propose - again for the first time - to provide funds for advance purchase of land for highways.

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Too often, highway planners are forced to sit by and watch whole communities or industrial developments spring up on land they know full well will be needed for a highway in the near future. Under present law, there is no way they can legally buy the land and hold it in reserve.

Our proposal would permit acquisition of that land up to seven years in advance of its actual need. It will permit purchase at lower prices. It will help cities do a better job of advance planning.

We told the last Congress that we want to change the rules under which homeowners are compensated for property that is purchased for highways. Fair market value does not always cover the cost of changing houses. We do not yet have a better formula. We intend to send one to the Congress within the next month.

And finally, we asked the Congress today to continue our programs under the Highway Beautification Act and the Highway Safety Acts.

We are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build the Interstate System in the United States. We are spending a good share of that money to build good design into the highway itself. That part you cannot always see. So it just makes good economic sense to spend a relatively small amount to protect what you can see. And that is what we are doing under the beautification program.

We have made substantial progress in buying scenic easements to preserve views; in preparing roadside rests; in landscaping; and in screening junkyards.

As of today, sixteen states - Kentucky among them - have signed agreements with the Federal government under which billboards are controlled along Federal-aid highways.

In the bill we sent to the Congress, we asked for expenditures of \$85 million in each of the fiscal years 1969, 1970, and 1971.

We regard this as more than a protection of our investment. We regard it as a protection of the countryside, itself - land that looks fairly rugged but turns out to be rather fragile when it comes up against man's capacity for litter.

Finally - automobile safety.

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Any discussion of safety must begin with the fact that without your support and the support of others, there would be no national safety law. But the job in many cases has barely begun.

The safety act which has attracted most attention is the one that requires the Department of Transportation to issue vehicle safety performance standards.

We have established 20 standards so far - all of them applying to automobiles manufactured for sale in this country since last January. They involve such features as collapsible steering wheels, interior crash padding, fail-safe braking systems, a new type of laminated windshield which reduces cutting, seat and shoulder safety belts, and systems for wiping, washing, and defogging windshields. Next January, additional standards will go into effect, requiring such things as head protection to reduce "whiplash" injuries.

The research done so far indicates these devices are saving lives.

But the car is only one factor in highway safety. Under another Act, we are dealing with the other factors - the highway, itself, and the driver in the other car.

This Act gives us the authority to set standards for a variety of state and local safety programs - inspection of motor vehicles, driver education, alcohol, highway design and others.

Each standard sets forth a minimum level of performance which state and community programs must meet.

The Act provides that the Federal government will provide matching funds to help bring every state to higher safety levels.

Kentucky has met the standards in several areas. In others, it has not.

One important standard involves the drunk driver. Recent studies show that more than half of all fatal highway crashes involve alcohol. They show that in cases in which a single car has simply run off the road, 75 percent involved heavy drinking.

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Twenty-nine states have now passed legislation enacting a so-called implied consent law as required in our standards. This means that when you accept a drivers license, you are deemed to have given your consent to a chemical test if you are ever arrested for driving while intoxicated. Refusal to submit to such a chemical test can be cause for revocation of license. Kentucky has an implied consent law.

We are proposing to continue and expand the highway safety program. We look to the day when every state will have effective programs of driver education, vehicle inspection, improved licensing laws and others which demonstrably can help guard the lives of Americans on the highways.

Such laws do not come automatically. You must make it clear that you need them and want them. Nor do they automatically save lives. They must be enforced.

The United States has the best transportation in the world. But, as President Johnson said when he asked for the creation of the Department, it is "not good enough." Not as long as 53,000 people die in highway accidents each year. Not as long as the trip from the airport to downtown can take longer than the flight, itself. Not as long as mass transit remains - for most cities - a relatively slow, uncomfortable alternative to the automobile for transportation in the downtown area.

And so we are beginning to unravel the tangles. We, in the Department of Transportation, will do all we can. We shall act as a central clearinghouse for transportation technology and knowhow. We shall sponsor research and make the resulting information available. We shall sponsor individual transportation projects that have the promise of common application. We shall establish standards of safety and performance. And finally, we shall provide funds.

We shall, however, make little advance if this is all there is. Your interest, your efforts, and your assistance will also be required. The impetus must come from you. I am delighted, consequently, to see so many organizations as are here tonight joined together in a common interest. There are not too many hopeful notes in this national transportation business; but your dinner tonight is one of them.

Thank you.

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