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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
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Statement by Alan S. Boyd, Secretary of Transportation,  
before the Subcommittee on Roads, Senate Committee on Public  
Works, on Urban Highways, May 27, 1968, 11:00 A.M., 4200 New  
Senate Office Building.

I would like to begin my testimony with a word of appreciation to this Committee and particularly to you, Mr. Chairman. We are all aware of the many complex situations that confront our highway programs in urban areas. The condition of our cities and their relationships with transportation become daily more complicated and uncertain. Considering the atmosphere of confusion in our cities, these hearings are timely and crucial. I would like to thank the Committee for its initiative in trying to find solutions to the obvious problems that exist.

At this time we face two major problems:

First, and most immediate, we need to continue our progress on the present Interstate System by dealing with the problems created by competing goals and values in urban areas. Unless we can somehow deal with these problems, construction of the Interstate System will either be considerably delayed or we will be faced with increasing opposition to urban highways in general.

Second, we have reached the time when we must begin to plan the foundations of future highway programs. Considering the problems we have already encountered in urban areas it would appear to be wise for us to plan our future highway programs with full consideration of the fundamental issues of city life. As we proceed with completing the urban portions of the Interstate System, as we begin to understand the problems we face, and as we develop measures to provide a rational integration of this major highway system into our cities, we can improve our understanding of those fundamentals of urban transportation planning which can provide the basis for the planning of future highway systems.

You will hear Lowell Bridwell and Frank Turner describe some of the techniques of planning and design which we use or plan to use to accelerate progress on the Interstate System in urban areas. These techniques involve such imaginative proposals as the Urban Design Team, now being used in Baltimore and Chicago, the development of joint use projects, and expanded and much improved relocation assistance programs. We can, I think, expect these and similar techniques to relive some of the problems which complicated the timely construction of the Interstate program.

It would, however, be naive to assume that these proposals will meet the objections raised to certain urban segments of the Interstate System. In many cities portions of the Interstate System have become so entangled with deep political and social forces that we cannot expect the alleviation of immediate problems to resolve the controversies. In these particular hard core situations, we must proceed with caution and flexibility. Failure to do so will, by spreading the base of highway opposition, greatly endanger the completion of other segments of the Interstate System and jeopardize rational planning and construction under future urban highway programs. Each serious controversy which now exists will need to be examined and re-examined in depth not only from the standpoint of routing and design but also from that of need and justification in the light of the very real social and human consequences that are involved. This may delay the completion of some urban segments and, possibly in a few cases, require substantial modification of present plans.

Many of these urban location problems are primarily local matters and the committee has already heard from many local officials and experts concerning them. I would, therefore, like to devote the major portion of my testimony to the general subject of planning for and implementing future urban highway programs.

One common experience we have in many cities seems relevant to the development of future programs. Highway planners have proposed specific projects, received the concurrence of city officials, and proceeded with final planning only to find at some later time and after much costly preparation that the city has reversed its previous commitment. This has even happened in cases where very considerable efforts were made to accommodate

local desires and interests and where consideration was given to social and environmental impacts. These are, I need not say, extremely difficult circumstances for the highway planner. Too often, he is accused of being insensitive to local urban interests when, in fact, those interests change so rapidly that it is difficult for him to keep pace.

The frustrating experience of planning for our cities in recent years is relevant for the future because it indicates the difficulty of planning long-term programs in the context of rapidly changing social conditions and attitudes toward those social conditions. The planning and construction of highway systems, particularly in urban areas, is unavoidably a lengthy process and, if the criteria on which that process is judged change considerably in the interim, an extremely difficult situation is created. All indications are that we will have to accept as a fundamental reality of our times that cities are and will continue to be in a constant state of flux and that, therefore, we will have to develop our future urban highway programs with sufficient flexibility that they will endure under very changeable conditions.

These considerations lead, I think, to the need to base future urban highway programs on three fundamental principles:

First, it would appear that future highway system plans which affect urban areas will need to be made more flexible to meet the complex conditions in our cities.

Second, the highway planning procedures will need to be made much more sensitive to a wide range of specific community interests and goals within each urban area.

Third and possibly most important, the role of highway planning in rebuilding and revitalizing our cities will have to be taken fully into account.

The success of our future urban highway programs will, I think, depend largely on our adherence to these principles. As our experience with urban highway planning has increased, we have realized the pervasive relationships between transportation and the general problems of cities. It is inevitable that we will become involved in these problems and, unless we can somehow accept that involvement, and use it to foster imaginative solutions, we will find ourselves in the unpopular and untenable position of following superficial community objectives which always change faster than our ability to accommodate them.

I would like now to devote the rest of my testimony to a very brief description of how each of these principles - program flexibility, sensitivity to community interests and active participation in community redevelopment - might be implemented.

First, considering the need for program flexibility, it has become apparent that the travel demand in urban areas combined with the relatively great sensitivity of highway travel to congestion, requires a sophisticated and very specialized approach to highway planning. Experience has demonstrated that the goals of urban highway systems must be placed in more specific terms than accommodating existing or forecasted general traffic demand. In place of meeting the demands of general traffic growth, it appears necessary and desirable to accommodate specific types of travel at specific times and places. Thus, certain highway segments at certain times may need to give preference to bus travel while others may need to provide special facilities to trucks and other commercial vehicles. Beyond transportation concerns, some highway improvements may have to be directed toward specific social or environmental problems. For example, certain facilities may be needed to give low-income residents access to jobs, while others may be planned specifically to reduce serious problems in air pollution and noise by routing through traffic along sparsely populated corridors on the outskirts of our cities.

In order to accommodate specific urban transportation goals, Federal-aid programs in urban areas will have to be considerably restructured in order to provide increased flexibility. Standards will need to be set less in terms of highway geometrics and more in terms of techniques for solving specific problems. In fact we are already taking actions to increase the flexibility of urban highway programs.

The best example of this, of course, is the TOPICS program. As you know, we have conducted this program on a pilot basis for over a year. Now in the proposed Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968 (S.3418) which is before this Committee, we are proposing a substantial expansion of the program. I will discuss the proposal in greater detail in testimony on S. 3418, but I would point out to the Committee at this time, that the TOPICS program is probably the most significant highway proposal made since 1956. I urge the Committee to consider it favorably.

The second principle - that of improving sensitivity to local community interests and goals follows directly from the desirability of developing a flexible urban program. If urban highway improvements are to be directed toward meeting specific local goals, it is essential that these goals be clearly defined and placed in terms which are relevant to highway development. Our experience with the urban highway planning process shows this will not be easy.

Today's attempts by the highway planner to direct transportation toward serving community goals are very often frustrated by a lack of cohesive community planning and a consequent failure by local decision makers to articulate community goals. Confusion and conflicting opinions result from public hearings, from fragmented political jurisdictions, from understaffed and insensitive planning bodies and from the failure of local leaders to decide on community development objectives. Yet, for all their deficiencies, I think that we have no choice but to follow planning procedures which are sensitive to the needs of individual communities and elicit community involvement in the development of the plans.

In evolving new procedures we should, at the very beginning, recognize that community involvement must precede the development of specific highway plans. Present planning procedures require that plans be presented for review by the community through the public hearing or local planning bodies only after they have been developed in some detail. The problem, of course, is that urban highways should be planned from their inception to meet specific goals and, unless those goals are well defined before highway planning begins, later response by the community is likely at best to be erratic. Ideally, the highway planner should begin with a set of well-defined community goals, and proceed to develop highways which further those goals. This ideal is, however, very far from a reality. Few, if any, cities now have the mechanism for developing a structure of relevant community goals phrased in operational terms. Where such a mechanism does exist, we seldom know enough about the long-term impact of transportation upon community development to permit a community consensus to develop as to the nature of our highway plans.

In metropolitan-wide planning we recognize the need for the continuing comprehensive planning process to involve both the metropolitan and the neighborhood community. This requires an integration of highway planning into total community development planning, the existence of a well-staffed and well-funded multi-disciplined planning organization, and a continuing meaningful dialogue between the planners and the leaders of the community. In terms of future Federal programs we may have to devote considerably more funds to planning than we have in the past. As a society, we will have to insist upon a more meaningful definition of community goals prior to the development of specific transportation plans as well as a commitment, arrived at in democratic fashion, by the metropolitan community to those goals and plans.

With HUD we will take steps which will improve the relationship between transportation systems planning and comprehensive community planning. We are currently working

with HUD to more clearly define our respective roles in urban planning affairs and better assure that transportation plans are responsive to overall community development objectives.

In addition, we in DOT are reappraising our own procedures to insure that our own hearing procedures provide a full opportunity for community involvement in planning and highway decisions.

We will issue within a few weeks, a new procedure on public hearings. It will require that two public hearings be held on most projects; the first hearing will be primarily for the purposes of mutual education and exploration of alternatives; the second will be on the specific project plans developed by the highway department. We believe that this procedure will result in far greater public participation in the highway development process and, as a result, will work to the ultimate advantage of the urban highway program.

The third and possibly the most important ingredient to future highway programs should be the active participation of highway planning and programs in urban revitalization and redevelopment. We all recognize that transportation is one of the most powerful factors, under public control, influencing the development of urban areas. Given the fact that our urban areas suffer from many very deep-seated problems we have the opportunity and, I think, the obligation to plan and implement future urban highway programs in a way that will promote the resurgence of many urban areas.

As the planners of the nation's future transportation programs we can, if we have the understanding and the imagination, play a crucial, if not the summary role in this rebuilding of our cities. We need first to recognize the strong intrinsic interrelationships between transportation and the locations and relationships among urban activities. A recognition of this interrelationship leads to the conclusion that the arrangement of activities and the transportation that serves those activities ought to be developed in close coordination. It is significant, in fact, that coordinated transportation land use development is not only a practical means for creating a well-ordered, livable urban environment; it is essential to the creation of efficient urban transportation systems. We have all seen what the removal of high density zoning restrictions can do to a highway recently constructed on the assumption that low density controls will remain in effect.

As we become more involved in all facets of urban transportation it seems inevitable that we will have to become concerned with related land use development practices. As difficult and complex as this involvement may become, I propose that we become involved not with reluctance but with imagination and energy. I propose that we use the powerful impacts of

transportation on urban development in a positive way and as a tool in creative urban planning. Specifically, one of the basic objectives of our future urban highway programs should be to foster, with other agencies, joint transportation-land use efforts to develop and redevelop urban communities.

Again, we are already moving in the right direction. The urban design teams in Baltimore and Chicago provide many of the fundamental relationships that are necessary. In Baltimore, we are learning much by our attempts to integrate the Interstate System into the urban fabric, yet we can go further; we can begin with a conception of a community as we are in the linear city proposed in Brooklyn, New York. There the proposed Cross-Brooklyn Expressway will act as a catalyst for nearly \$1 billion of other public and private funds to produce a sizeable new complex of housing, education, medical, and recreational facilities in a currently blighted area. This project, conceived by the City of New York, but supported by the New York State Highway Department, four Federal Departments and a number of institutions and industrial concerns exemplifies what can be done when transportation facilities are used, not only to provide transportation service, but also to aid in urban redevelopment.

The three broad proposals contained within this testimony form a compatible basic philosophy for a future Federal-aid urban highway program. That structure begins with the basic tool - a highly flexible, problem oriented urban highway system which can meet the complex, changing needs of our urban society. Next, it provides for the development of planning techniques which can formulate specific local, regional and national transportation needs in the context of well-defined, democratically developed community goals. Last, it provides for the creative participation of the Federal-aid highway program in the critically important job of rebuilding our cities. The underlying assumption of this philosophy is that highway programs will be met with continuing frustration in urban areas unless those programs and we who plan them become intimately and actively involved in meeting the needs of our cities.

These proposals are, unquestionably, far reaching but they are certainly not beyond the capabilities of this country's highway planning. We can recall that sixteen years ago the Interstate System was an extremely ambitious and far reaching idea. That program grew out of a recognition by highway planners that, considering the pressing need for major interstate highways, an ambitious and imaginative new program was needed. Thanks to their imagination and foresight we have today a magnificent national highway system nearing completion. We are today faced with other quite different but equally pressing needs. In the course of this hearing, you will hear from Lowell Bridwell, Frank Turner, and me about what we are doing now in the Federal-aid

programs to better relate highways to the urban complex. We think what we are doing will aid us in developing more far-reaching solutions for the future. I have told you the kind of approach I think we must take in planning our future urban highway programs. We hope as time goes on to be more specific, but we must realize that the problems confronting our cities are unfortunately more complex than anything else that we as a society have dealt with. Solutions will not come quickly or easily. There will be continued bitterness; we will long for the good old days when highway planning and construction were simpler tasks. Those days have passed. We must recognize this and work to accommodate highway programs to the conditions we face. As highway planners we have a great opportunity; as Americans we have an obligation.