



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE A LUNCHEON WITH CIVIC AND STATE OFFICIALS IN JUNEAU, ALASKA, MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 1969, AT 12:30 P. M.

I am happy to be here. This is my first visit to Alaska and I find already that everything here exceeds my expectations.

I have come to Alaska to learn first hand about Alaska's transportation needs and about its transportation potential. Your State is at a turning point. Decisions made today will reach beyond the newly found oil fields or copper discoveries. They will have long-range effects on all of Alaska's economy as well as the future direction of the State's society and culture.

These decisions, moreover, involve many participants -- private industry, local governments, the Alaska State Government here in Juneau and several departments of the Federal Government.

And these decisions finally, will involve major investments.

We need to have, consequently, a tremendous amount of information.

We need to know much more than we do now before these judgments can be made.

(more)

I have also come here to find out how we in the Department of Transportation can work with you officials of the State government. You know most of our component agencies, certainly -- the Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway and the Federal Railroad Administrations and our United States Coast Guard. But we are more than an operating Department. We have also been charged with the responsibility of developing a national transportation policy -- a policy that takes into account all modes of transportation, and outlines how each mode can best operate in concert with the others.

I am sure that much of the planning and research and development work we are doing will be applicable here in Alaska. Given the special nature of Alaska transportation challenges, a full study of all new techniques and technology is mandatory. It could be that the hovercraft is an efficient vehicle for Alaska operations. It may be that we should encourage the development of some kind of ocean-going vehicle capable of beaching itself and conducting loading and unloading operations where there are no harbors. We need to look at the best technology in river transportation. There is need here for a thorough and comprehensive exchange of views and information by all parties concerned.

I report, finally, that I am making this trip at the personal request of President Nixon. He wants an on-the-spot report of how the Federal Government can be of assistance.

The Federal Government's position in Alaska is unique. It is a major land holder in the State; it is the proprietor of the State's largest railroad, and the many Federal facilities here make it the State's major employer. But there is a wider interest. This is the Nixon Administration's concern for the Alaskan people. We are, consequently, interested in a transportation system that will help resolve many of Alaska's traditional problems -- the isolation of the small towns and native villages of westward Alaska -- the total dependence of these communities on relatively expensive air and water transportation -- and the consequent high cost of all processed and manufactured goods and of passenger travel.

Certainly, transportation alone cannot resolve all of your problems but it can be the first step in the development of new economic efforts. Better transportation means lower costs and lower prices. That is a good beginning.

The immediate objective of our trip is Alaskan transportation. But our bigger and long-range purpose is improving the well being of the Alaskan people.

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