



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, AT MEETING OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA, TRAVELERS INN, TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1969, 12:00 NOON.

I want to bring you greetings from President Nixon. He requested me to make this trip to provide him direct information on Alaska's transportation needs. He and all the members of his Administration are vitally concerned with your problems. This concern is the basis for the President's insistence on strong Federal-State partnership. This is what he means by Federalism.

I participated this spring in the Golden Spike Centenary observances in Utah -- the ceremonies in connection with the completion 100 years ago of the first railroad across the West from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean. And many of the speakers referred to those early days -- the excitement at the realization of how the railroad would change and improve the life of the frontier families. I sense some of that excitement here in Fairbanks today. And I think it is well deserved.

Alaska is on the verge of realizing its true potential. The oil discoveries on the North Slope and the rich copper deposits at Bornite are tremendously important and promise great things for your State. But they require now vast new transportation systems. And that is my purpose in coming -- to listen and to learn -- to meet and talk with Alaskan

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businessmen, citizens, transportation experts and State officials so that we can know how best the Federal Government can work with you.

I remind you that the work we are talking about is not something in the distant future. Our Department of Transportation people are already deeply involved in this program of a reasonable method of opening up the North Country. Our Federal Aviation Administration people have been working overtime to meet new demands arising from the North Slope oil strike. The drilling operations there must be supported by air. I've been told it takes about 160 flights by giant cargo aircraft to move an oil rig and its associated equipment to the North Slope. And once in operation, a camp requires up to five "Hercules" aircraft loads a day. All this means there are more than 100 round trip flights a day serving the oil company airstrips on the Slope.

To handle this increased traffic, the Alaskan region of the FAA has recently established new North Slope air traffic control and communications facilities. A flight service station at Barrow started operating a year ago. A radio beacon at Barrow has been designated for air traffic control purposes, and company-owned beacons in the area have been integrated into our common system. With traffic control now established and reliable communications equipment now installed, this giant airlift operation should proceed at a more orderly -- and safer -- pace.

The oil discoveries have also meant extra business for the Department's Alaska Railroad. And departmental pipeline specialists have been meeting and conferring with the oil companies to insure proper pipeline safety.

Other Transportation Department officials -- in the form of the officers and men of the United States Coast Guard -- are providing expertise and equipment in the very exciting Standard Oil Company effort to open up the fabled Northwest Passage with the supertanker "Manhattan."

What is most obvious -- to all of our Department of Transportation operating administrations -- is that existing transportation facilities in Alaska cannot do the job that waits to be done. Improvements and additions are needed -- and this is perhaps our most important work. We expect to move ahead in the very near future with a massive planning study for a new joint-use transportation corridor that will move out from the Fairbanks area to the North Country. This planning will involve more than just extending the Alaska Railroad or building a highway. We are determined to help Alaska establish the best transportation system of its type in the world. We hope to utilize the most advanced transportation planning and the best available technology.

The immediate objective of this planning is transportation to serve the North Slope and the potential development at Bornite. But our larger purpose is to open up all the northern areas for proper development.

Let me make it perfectly clear at this point that it is my personal conviction -- and in fact the law requires it as well -- that any potential transportation development shall be brought about with a minimum of harmful effects on the environment. You Alaskans are proud of the natural beauty and wonders of your State. So are we. And we shall work together to preserve the extremely delicate balance of nature in the Northlands.

As I mentioned this morning at our meeting at the University, we recognize full well the effect that man's unthinking efforts can have on the fragile ecology of the Arctic. We know full well that protecting natural resources is not a matter of appeasing people who holler long and loud. We know full well that such protection of the tundra, the virgin forests, and the wildlife is vital for the survival of the human race -- for far too often, especially back in the Northeast where I come from, the results of man's carelessness are far too apparent.

Yet at the same time, we are prepared to accept the challenge of reasonable development. We have the know-how and the ability to make use of our resources without destroying the land, and it is in the northern part of Alaska that we can prove it.

Let's look for a moment at the development of your State from the Gulf of Alaska as far north as this beautiful city of Fairbanks.

The Alaska Railroad has shaped the history of this State. Today about 75 percent of the State's gross product is produced within the railbelt and is directly dependent on the railroad. Two-thirds of your people live in the railbelt. Those tracks of steel have eased the construction of military bases and made possible the development of a number of industries. The railroad is in itself a major employer with 850 people on its payroll.

We anticipate the new transportation corridor will be just as important to the rest of Alaska.

Any transportation system in this State faces challenges not generally found in the South 48. The environment of extreme cold and permafrost terrain is seemingly hostile to transportation. There are again, challenges in operations -- seasonality and a preponderance of one way traffic. But I am confident these can be overcome.

Alaska does, however, have one great transportation advantage that may offset these difficulties. We can start from scratch. We can plan first. We can think first. This transportation corridor of railroad track, highway, airport facilities, power lines and communications facilities need not be compromised to fit with existing outmoded forms of transportation. It can be engineered and built in accordance with the best efficiencies and economies. It is our plan that it will be a demonstration -- a showcase of perfect transportation planning.

The significance of suitable transportation is that it adds value to the product. A barrel of oil coming out of a well-head at Prudhoe Bay is worth very little. That same barrel of oil moving through a refinery grows in value. That same barrel of oil broken down into its ingredients -- one of which is gasoline being pumped into the tank of the family car -- is worth many times more. Transportation, obviously, creates and enhances the value of Alaskan products.

Certainly, we in Washington want to help. As I noted earlier I came to Alaska to learn. I have learned enough already to become an Alaskan booster. I shall, on my return to the Capitol, join with the members of your congressional delegation in telling the people of the Lower 48 what you have to offer.

Their kind of representation is bringing Alaska a lot closer to Washington -- and is bringing Washington a lot closer to Alaska.

I have learned in my first few days here what makes them so optimistic and what makes them work so hard for Alaska. I think it is their view that the new North Slope discovery will serve as a catalyst which will bring in its wake a whole series of new developments. It is a breakthrough -- a lever which may lift the whole Alaskan economy and eventually put an end to the past cycles of high costs and high prices. I hope it proves to be such. I hope to be able to do what I can to help make this Alaskan development successful.

I want, finally, to thank you people for setting up this special luncheon and inviting me here. I have met many wonderful people here -- and made many new friends. I have enjoyed every minute of it.

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