



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF  
TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS'  
CONFERENCE, THE BROADMOOR, COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO,  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1969, 10:30 A. M.

I would like to touch on a few of the high points of  
what we are up to at the Department of Transportation.

Our tradition as a Nation of problem-solvers should  
remind us that there are answers to problems of traffic  
congestion, pollution, poverty, welfare, education and  
housing. Maybe we just haven't tried hard enough. Maybe  
too often we haven't provided the backbone of leadership.  
Maybe we haven't been willing to pay the bill. Maybe we  
have been so busy putting out fires that we haven't kept  
our ideas up-to-date. We sometimes forget that our many  
problems flow from the success of the American way of life,  
not failure.

As a matter of fact, dealing with prosperity is actually  
the greatest problem in this country today. Rising incomes  
permit our people to consume steadily more land, air and  
water.

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They pollute their surroundings and they clog the highways and airways. Yet the kinds and amounts of environmental activity will soon increase far beyond present levels. If the trend of the last twenty years continues, average family incomes will exceed twenty-four thousand dollars per year by the turn of the century. These affluent consumers will surely be making extraordinary demands upon the dwindling resources of a finite world.

This Nation is headed for an era of total consumption and total mobility and I'm not sure we're ready for it. We had better start now to face its implications.

In transportation, for example, I take it for granted that no single mode is flexible enough to provide the mobility we require. There is no rule of nature requiring us to take planes on trips of less than three hundred miles. There is no law of logic that forces all of us to drive downtown or to the airport at the same time and in the same kind of vehicle. There is no Government order decreeing that rapid transit must perish while highways become parking lots for miles of angry commuters.

The Department of Transportation is pledged to find ways to expand our range of choices and improve the link-ups between these modes -- in short, to develop a national transportation policy.

Air congestion and airport access will provide a critical test of our imagination. We have had to impose flight rationing at five of our busiest airports because the traffic has outgrown our capacity. Yet we have projected an astonishing three hundred percent increase in air travel demand by 1979.

To prepare for this wave of humanity, we have proposed to Congress that we invest five billion dollars over the next ten years to completely upgrade our airports and air traffic control systems. And don't let anyone tell you the users can't afford to pay for it -- they can. But this is just half the job. Air travelers often spend more time getting to and from the airfield than they do in the air.

We need to demonstrate a breakthrough in ground access to airports and my hunch is that the tracked air cushion vehicle will be the first off the drawing boards. If current research in tunneling pays off, the gravitrain, which swoops of its own weight along underground channels, may be a good solution. "Tube Flight" could relieve airport congestion by competing with planes on intercity trips of three to four hundred miles.

But what about traffic paralysis within urban regions? Today nearly eighty percent of our people live in cities. By the end of this century that proportion will rise to ninety percent.



Most of the one hundred-million-person increase in population will concentrate in metropolitan areas. So the urban population will double in about thirty years. Small and medium-sized cities will participate in this growth as well as the huge regional complexes and linear cities that we see developing along our coasts and around the Great Lakes.

Now it has been said by wise men that everybody loves an automobile. Apparently that is so, because people rely almost entirely upon cars to meet their need for transportation in town. There are now more than eighty million cars in this country, double the number in 1950. By the year 2000 they will double again.

Cars are obviously being produced faster than people are, and they use up space and pollute the air at a prodigious rate. In many areas we are going to have to choose between cars and people at some point and to some extent during the next ten years.

It is to his great and enduring historical credit that President Nixon recognizes the dangers of relying solely upon one mode of transportation. It is self-evident that we have a gross imbalance when we spend more money on highways in six weeks than we spend on mass transit in six years! That is not an efficient allocation of our potential transportation resources. It's not balanced transportation. Let's take a look at where this imbalance has taken us.

First of all, public transportation has declined sadly in reliability and availability in the last twenty years. Transit patronage is only half what it was fifteen years ago. Profits have shrunk, fares have shot up, and the commuters are so mad they have begun to organize into protest groups.

Low income people would like to get some of those good jobs being created in the suburbs, but often the bus just doesn't go where the job is. Likewise, a black man with any pride is not going to bother trying for such a job if the only way to get there is to get up with the birds and transfer two or three times and pay a dollar twenty-five for the privilege. It's against human nature.

To put it in one sentence, if we expect to make any headway with our urban problems of congestion, poverty, pollution and employment, we are going to have to try something new in the way of urban transportation.

We will be compelled to invest many billions of dollars over the coming years if we are to provide the new and updated public transportation our urban residents need to assure mobility. But



the cities alone cannot sustain this burden. I am as aware as you are that State and local expenditures have increased nearly three times in the last ten years. Your debts have risen by the same amount and now exceed one hundred billion dollars.

Over the next ten years, the cities and States are going to run short by another two hundred fifty billion dollars and there is no prospect whatever that they can plug the gap with bonds. Without Federal help, public transportation would probably dry up in all but a few of the largest cities, with consequences for civil disorder, urban decay, and air pollution that any reasonable man would want to avoid at all costs. Our current Federal expenditures of one hundred seventy-five million dollars annually for public transportation aren't even enough to patch the rough spots let alone provide the sophisticated services an increasingly educated and impatient public demands.

President Nixon has taken action now to solve this problem before it becomes completely unmanageable. The President and I have proposed to Congress that this Nation invest ten billion dollars in transit grants and loans over a twelve year period from 1971 to 1982. We seek authority to commit funds starting at three hundred million dollars and rising to one billion dollars during the first five years. We are asking for "contract authority" to obligate funds over the full five years so as to assure cities of the support they need to undertake long-range projects.

Contract authority is the key concept in this bill. It is a well-established budgetary mechanism granting full Federal authority to enter into binding commitments to the full extent of the fund authorization. The authorizations would not be limited to annual periods.

I'll concede this is not the trust fund that I was plugging for. But as I stated publicly on many occasions, I favored a trust fund unless somebody could come up with something else that would work as well. And this approach will work. It obligates the Federal Government to support programs once the contracts have been signed -- period. No exceptions. We will be legally obligated to follow through on approved plans -- and that will give the cities the assurance of continuity they have always demanded.

Cities of any size would be eligible for this aid. Up to two thirds of the cost of projects could be paid for with Federal money. Any kind of transit facility could be developed -- new rail lines, better buses, new means of communication, real-time route information for riders or special services for low-mobility groups. Funds would be available for new systems to alleviate downtown congestion, provide more flexible service in the suburbs and in the ghetto, and encourage experiments with point-to-point service between employment clusters throughout metropolitan areas.



Our Center Cities Transportation Project is right now gathering detailed information about community and metro needs so that we can make timely use of the new funds if Congress passes this vital bill. We are beginning to find out what we need. Now we must finance it, and we must be as generous as we have been with highways.

A unique and vital feature of the bill would permit cities to purchase land in advance of transit construction where necessary to control speculation and exploding costs of rights-of-way. This feature could become a vital tool in long-range environmental planning for cities of the future and help us to make best use of our limited resources of metropolitan land.

However, nothing would be done hastily and local units of government would be required to conduct public hearings on all proposals. The Administration bill would provide financial help to operators of private transit lines -- this is important because many such lines are still run by private companies. It would also support a much expanded D-O-T program of research on urban transportation to push for the technical breakthroughs that are within our reach.

This bill has been a long time coming, and it's long overdue. If enacted I believe it will result in new transit systems in this country within three years of passage. It surely must be enacted if we are ever to have a transportation system that reflects a national transportation policy.

I think we have finally realized that the quality of public transportation can determine our standard of living, our productivity and our enjoyment of life just as much as schools, housing and job opportunity. Without a balanced system of personal mobility, the inner city decays and even the suburbs lose vitality.

And how would such a program affect our highway building activities? I am certain that you men are well aware that without healthy public transport, we can never hope to build roads fast enough in urban areas to get ahead of the traffic they generate. That's a mathematical fact.

I think it is clear, therefore, that the future of public transportation is not a mere matter of convenience for city dwellers. It transcends technical questions and becomes a matter of the shape, the quality, and the existence of cities as we have known them. Access to urban amenities is an essential tool in creating urban environments that meet the needs and extend the measure of man.

I have faith that we will make the right decision. We have the emerging awareness. We have the resources. And I see a new determination to break with the past. Public transportation can be the royal road to a better life for the citizens of all our fifty States. The waiting game is over. The days of action loom ahead.