

68)



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

54-S-69

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE GREATER DALLAS PLANNING COUNCIL, TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 9, 1969, 7:00 P.M., GRAND BALLROOM OF THE STATLER HILTON
HOTEL, DALLAS, TEXAS

I am delighted to be here in your good city. And it's an honor and a pleasure to be here specifically to talk with the greater Dallas Planning Council.

Let me say at the outset that I always like to come to Dallas, because it gives me a chance to see your Mayor, Erik Jonsson. He is one of the great men of this nation -- and he has provided outstanding leadership in preparing this city for its present excellence and its undoubtedly greater future. I'm proud to call him a friend.

Dallas, of course, is one of the five participating cities in our experimental Center Cities Transportation Program -- through which we hope to accumulate a wealth of basic information which can then be utilized by virtually every metropolitan area in the country.

(more)

I assume that most of you here tonight have some acquaintance with the Center Cities Project, and its very necessary goal of opening up our core city areas for free-flowing circulation of people and goods. Our people have learned much already from the Dallas phase of the project, and we look forward to continuing developments.

I might point out that we are working in fertile ground here in the greater Dallas area, because you people have had the foresight to do much of the planning work already. It is extremely gratifying to us to know, for instance, that Dallas-Fort Worth has, for many years been in the forefront of transportation planning. This is one part of the country where thinking men have long recognized the need for compatibility between various modes of transportation. For instance, way back when greater Southwest International Airport was first being discussed there was always a full understanding that adequate ground access would be an absolute necessity. Strange as it may seem to this group, this isn't the case everywhere. Too often airport developers forget that people have to get to the airport -- and too often highway designers haven't looked far enough ahead into the future.

In connection with GSIA, however, we are delighted that the Regional Airport Board and the Texas Highway Department have agreed that a provision be made for rapid transit the day GSIA opens, but believe me -- the day will come when you people will appreciate every inch of transportation capacity you can get!

And when I say every, I mean exactly that.

It is the "in" thing in some groups today, to be "pro" public transportation and "anti" highway. Well, let me make very clear that I'm not "anti" anything -- because I know that we cannot put all our eggs in one basket -- we cannot rely totally on any one mode of transportation.

For instance, even though I am a champion of public transportation I know full well that this nation and its cities need to expand and improve our highway system even beyond the 42,500 miles of the Interstate System.

Simple mathematical facts -- such as the fact that tomorrow evening at this time, just twenty-four hours from now -- there will be 10,000 additional automobiles on America's highways -- stare us in the face when we consider the need for more and better highways. Not only has the number of automobile registrations tripled in the past twenty-five years, but automobile usage is increasing at the rate of about 40 percent every 8 years. We are faced with increasing demands for highway capacity -- both rural and urban.

On the other hand, we are faced with tremendously increasing problems of congestion, pollution, delay and stagnation. For in all too many cases, the motorist is behind the wheel of a car because there is just no alternative. There is no other way to get there from here. The answer is simple, yet it is complex.

(more)

It is simple because every thinking person in this room knows there are more efficient, safer, faster ways to move large numbers of people. And that way is with clean, safe, fast and efficient public transportation.

Yet the answer is complex because America, as a nation, is recognizing this fact very very late in the game.

We live in a time of fantastic accomplishment. We live in a time when skilled surgeons here in Dallas transplant beating human hearts. We live in a time when technicians in Houston sit at microphones and chat casually with colleagues who are walking on the face of the moon.

And yet we live in a time when the bulk of our domestic social efforts, and the bulk of our domestic budget, is being applied in practically emergency fashion to alleviate very human, very basic sufferings. We part with sizeable taxes in this country, from generally sizeable paychecks in order to allay and alleviate poverty, unemployment, ill health, hunger, ignorance and inadequate housing. Yet as President Nixon stated so effectively at the National Governors' Conference a week ago last night, "Never in human history has so much been spent by so many for such a negative result.

"All too often these expenditures have reaped a harvest of dissatisfaction, frustration, and bitter division. The cost of the lesson has been high, but we have learned that it is not only what we spend that matters; it is the way we spend it."

I would submit to this group tonight -- as I have done before the President and before my Cabinet colleagues -- that all the job training centers, employment opportunities, health facilities, educational institutions, recreational areas and housing projects -- all things that are needed in virtually all of our cities -- will never be fully utilized if the people cannot get to them inexpensively, safely, and efficiently.

We must have a new mobility in this nation if we are to fulfill our pledges to the disadvantaged, the young, the poor, the elderly and the physically handicapped.

We need to do this now. We need to do it through public transportation. We need to come up with the money at the Federal level. The total accumulated indebtedness of our cities and states is well over one hundred billion dollars now, and will probably increase by some 250-billion dollars more in the next ten years.

Without Federal help, public transportation would probably dry up in all but a few of the largest cities -- with consequences of civil disorder, urban decay, and air pollution that any reasonable man would want to avoid at all costs.

(more)

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 aid over a twelve year period. 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 budgetary mechanism granting 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. 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.

Let's take an example. Suppose city "X" needed a ten-million dollar transit grant from the Federal government.

We at DOT could approve the request, and that city would be assured that the ten million would be forthcoming over the time period required for design and construction.

Even though Congress had not actually appropriated the money, that city would know -- as well as could be known under the Highway Trust Fund, for instance -- that the funds needed would be appropriated by the Congress.

Bear in mind that the much-discussed Highway Trust Fund itself has always relied on the biennial action of the Congress.

There are a number of people who tend to think that highway trust funds are automatic -- and I remind you that they are not.

Since I had the privilege of helping to establish the Highway Fund some 13 years ago, we have always had to go to Congress every 2 years to appropriate money out of the fund.

And let's -- for a moment -- discuss the trust fund concept itself.

(more)

It is an ideal financing mechanism provided you have an identifiable group of users on whom you can impose user charges such as with the Highway Trust Fund.

The fact is, however, that we do not have the potential for user charges in the public transportation field. We cannot add a 10¢ or 15¢ surcharge on top of an already-high 25¢ to 40¢ bus fare for example.

This would be self-defeating and would probably result in a complete failure of the entire program. It would amount to taxing those who are least able to pay and we would suffer a subsequent loss of passengers.

So -- we have the bill that is now before the Congress, the one you have been reading about, the one that will provide ten billion dollars over a 12-year period.

Let me emphasize that this is not just a "big city" bill.

Not just subways for cities like Dallas, Atlanta, Seattle, and Pittsburgh, but improved bus (and other) systems for cities as small as 25,000 population.

This is legislation that deserves the support of leaders in all of the states, rural as well as urban. In addition to our all-important public transportation bill, our Department is also working very hard on another key piece of legislation, an airport-airways bill. This legislation, based on a trust fund paid for out of user charges, is designed to raise a total of five billion dollars over the next decade, to be matched by an equivalent sum raised by state and local units of government.

Here in Dallas, where Love Field ranks fourth nationally in itinerant aircraft operations and eighth in air carrier operations, our FAA people know full well the crush that is bringing about congestion in the airways and on the runways.

You are extremely fortunate that you are as far ahead with design and construction of the Greater Southwest International Airport, because from the day that airport is open for business, I am sure that it will be well used. Nationally, air passenger embarkations will triple by 1979 and quadruple by 1985. Air freight, too, is showing great increases.

There is no question that our airports and airways need help, and this Administration is moving full-speed-ahead to provide that help and assistance.

An area such as this -- that sees Love Field handling an average of 1,153 operations per day, certainly knows that air transport is a key to America's future prosperity, and that we must have the facilities to match our goals.

(more)

I have great hopes for both of our pieces of legislation. They are well-written, inclusive, and timely. They fit in well with the rest of this Administration's legislative package.

The bills bear within them the potential to initiate a better life for all of us. They encourage and finance the growth of a humane, orderly and balanced urban civilization.

They deserve your support as the very best solutions that are workable and acceptable at this time.

You here in greater Dallas have a lot at stake in these bills. They can help assure not only civic prosperity, but civic peace and order as well. And that is what planning is all about.

Your goal is to assure the maximum prosperity, comfort, safety, convenience and pleasure of all your citizens.

Your efforts have already done a great deal to advance Dallas toward that goal.

Together, we can create an urban culture worthy of the name.