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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION, DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB, DETROIT, MICHIGAN, JUNE 20, 1969, 7:00 P.M.

It is a pleasure and an honor to have been invited to address this most distinguished group. I am proud to be here with the men who keep America "on the move." But I hope you realize what happens when you invite a Washington official to come to dinner in Detroit.

What with 500-mile-an-hour jet planes, and the 1 hour time difference between here and Washington, the Secretary of Transportation had the pleasure of driving through rush-hour traffic in both cities!

Of course the traffic jams these days are not only on our streets and highways -- we have plenty of them in the airways too. A few weeks ago I was flying out of LaGuardia at about 5:30 in the evening -- in an official Government plane -- and we were eighteenth in line for takeoff.

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I asked the pilot if our FAA boys up in the tower knew that the Secretary of Transportation was aboard. And they said, "Yes sir, and we're still eighteenth in line!"

So let me make it clear at the outset that if I say anything to you fellows tonight about congestion, I'm not referring only to highways and automobiles; we have problems in a few other areas as well.

Gentlemen, despite what some of your critics have said (especially in letters to the Department of Transportation!) the automobile industry has contributed more to American progress, by far, than it has taken away.

Your industry -- since World War I -- has reshaped modern society. I suspect it's safe to say that the automobile has brought about more social changes than any other invention in the past fifty years.

We all acknowledge Detroit's massive contribution to the National economy. An astonishing \$14 billion -- 16 percent of our estimated gross national product this year -- will be produced directly or indirectly by the automotive industry.

It's no wonder that so many people with outstanding managerial skills find their way to the motor city. Indeed, the country is fortunate to have your resources of intellect and imagination to draw upon at such a crucial juncture in our history.

I referred -- a few minutes ago -- to transportation congestion in a rather light vein. But gentlemen, let there be no misunderstanding. We are in the midst of a transportation crisis in America right now, it's not funny, and it's getting worse.

The crisis has been several years in the building, but I have found that it doesn't do much good to complain about what hasn't been done in the past.

President Nixon has ranked transportation and its problems on his top ten priority list. He has directed me to develop an overall National transportation plan within six to nine months and we in the Department of Transportation are going to do it. We must do it! Usage of every mode of transportation is increasing. Ten years from now airline passenger travel is expected to be up 300 percent. The number of aircraft utilized by general aviation, including private flying, will expand from 114,000 today to at least 214,000 within the next ten years.

In the same period trucks will haul not 400 billion ton miles of freight, but 600 billion. Rail traffic will rise a respectable 25 percent in 9 years.

This growth causes problems, and we are out to help solve those problems.

This past Monday, President Nixon asked Congress to approve a \$5 billion program to improve the nation's air transportation facilities. As I stated before the Senate Commerce Committee on Tuesday, this program is one that can solve the problems to which it is addressed.

Our recommendations take into consideration the total impact of aviation growth. They include provisions for modernization of the airways systems, airport development, and even for the highway feeder systems which serve air facilities. A part of the program will be underwritten by airways users. They will be assured through the creation of a "designated account" into which their taxes will be paid, that their contributions will not be diverted to non-aviation purposes.

But, I did not come here to talk only about air travel. We have not fastened our attention on the noisy holding pattern above at the expense of the traffic congestion below. With the demand for automobiles being what it is -- our ground transportation system must be made fast and efficient. Today 86 million cars use our highways; by 1975 there will be 100 million, plus 20 million trucks and buses.

If we continue at such a pace, there simply will not be enough space in our cities to accommodate all those who would -- ideally -- like to drive. More and more it becomes plain that the automobile must be supplemented -- and I didn't say "replace," I said "supplemented" -- in the urban areas by other kinds of transport services.

Each mode in the system must be planned to complement -- not obstruct or rival -- the others.

As I am sure you know, the Federal government presently spends as much on highway construction in 6 weeks as it has put into urban transit in the last 6 years. Unless we intend to pave the entire surface of the country -- and no one wants that -- we have to stop this trend. We already have one linear mile of highway for every square mile of land area in the U.S.A.

To give people the mobility they increasingly demand and require in the next few years, our metropolitan area shall have to invest heavily in modern forms of public transportation, and the Federal government is going to have to help.

We intend to help. As you are no doubt aware -- the Department of Transportation will be sending to the White House, for submission to the Congress, a public transportation bill in the very near future. We are hoping to get the bill in the hopper soon -- once we've been able to get past the Bureau of the Budget, the Treasury Department, and the other arms of the Executive branch that have to clear this type of thing.

The public transportation program would be patterned, largely, after the fabulously successful highway trust fund.

The highway trust fund, of course, is financed through monies that are directly attributable to highway users -- and this is as it should be.

In public transportation, however, we are faced with a different set of problems. It doesn't take an economist to figure out that user fees -- additional taxes on present transit riders -- won't solve our problems. In the case of public transportation, the funds must be derived from some other source.

As you probably know, we are looking into the possibility of using a portion of the automobile excise tax as part of our source of revenue.

This can be justified on several counts. First of all, it is to the motorist's advantage to underwrite part of public transportation if we want to drive on uncongested highways.

Second, it is to the automobile industry's advantage. There's not much point in perfecting a 300 horsepower vehicle that crawls from interchange to interchange, nor is there much hope of expanding your sales if the average motorist looks upon driving as a chore rather than an efficient, pleasant means of transportation.

And let me be perfectly honest with you. If the Federal automobile excise tax is reduced or eliminated, how long do you think it would be before the states or even the cities jumped in with excise taxes of their own? And with the cost of government being what it is, who's to say that the Congress will allow this present source of revenue to disappear altogether?

We are looking for other revenue sources, too. In Massachusetts we added a two-cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to expand our Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Perhaps we could utilize a portion of the tax on alcoholic beverages.

In this connection I might point out that we received considerable support from an unexpected quarter. The Jenney Refining Company, a regional chain of service stations, spent thousands of dollars on full-page ads in the Boston papers urging support of rapid transit.

Bill Jenney maintained that he would never be able to sell oil and gasoline to cars that weren't going anywhere, and he was instrumental in convincing our electorate and our legislature that public transportation is absolutely essential if we are to meet the urban challenges four-square.

Gentlemen, I solicit your support for our public transportation legislation, and I submit with great sincerity that such legislation is, truly, in your best interests.

We look forward to working closely with all of you toward helping solve a problem that most definitely needs solving.

Let's talk for just a few moments about automobiles themselves.

I am well aware that you men -- and the companies you represent -- are looking toward a new generation of automobiles that are easier to drive, cheaper to repair and insure, and above all else, safer.

Let's face the fact that people can -- and sometimes do -- drive dangerously. But they must be protected from the consequences of those mistakes.

Let me re-cap for you, briefly, what our National Highway Safety Bureau has been attempting to do in the recent past:

First, highways. It is an unappreciated fact that safety starts from the road up. For every 5 miles of new interstate highway we build, we save one life per year every year. If there were no other reasons for completing the interstate system, this would be reason enough.

However, it is obvious that you can't rebuild the entire highway system of the country overnight according to modern standards. Spot improvements at the most dangerous sites along the roads have to be made. Over the past 5 years we have made some 18,000 spot improvements at a cost of \$1.2 billion. And this effort is paying off in safer passage for American drivers and their families everywhere.

Second, vehicles. With the intention of reducing crash injuries and fatalities we are investigating a series of new devices. I recently saw a film presentation of the airbag system and was most impressed.

We are well aware that the automotive industry is taking a serious and a sincere look at a wide array of devices and improvements that will enhance the safety of the motoring public, and we applaud you for the worthwhile efforts you are making.

You have our wholehearted support as you continue safety research programs, and we stand ready to help you in any way we can. As far as the actual mechanics of the vehicle are concerned, I see a tremendous validity to what Ed Cole said in a speech in West Virginia just a week ago tonight. He pointed out "the industry has everything to lose and nothing to gain when we deliver products of substandard quality to our customers or fail to provide satisfactory service."

Ed went on to say: "we pay a high penalty for defects in terms of costs for recall campaigns and warranty expenses. But we pay even more dearly in customer dissatisfaction and loss in owner loyalty which have detrimental effects on repeat sales and public reputation."

Gentlemen, we appreciate the efforts you are making; we urge you to continue; we know that a nation that can build a vehicle safe enough to take three men around the moon can build a station wagon safe enough for our wives and children.

In the months ahead, we in the Department of Transportation are putting new emphasis on structural design, braking, lighting, handling, and anti-skid devices. We will upgrade present standards for tire performance. Our support for such research is justified by the decrease in fatalities which has resulted, for example, from impact absorbing steering columns. We know, as you do, that there are gains to be made and lives to be saved when we apply the technical know-how that is the hallmark of the American automobile industry.

The third phase of automotive safety is, of course, people.

We have issued a number of highway safety standards in the area of better law enforcement; for instance we provide funds to develop more effective traffic court systems, to achieve uniform traffic regulations, and to improve police traffic services.

It pays off. Right here in Michigan -- and I pointed this out at the Sloan Safety Awards Luncheon in New York two weeks ago -- 89 percent of traffic fatalities involved violations of the law. We can make a major cutback in fatalities on our highways if we can emphasize -- and re-emphasize -- that laws were made to be obeyed, not broken.

And this brings us to the greatest of all human failings when it comes to death at the wheel -- and I'm talking of course about drinking and driving. There is no place whatsoever on any highway, anywhere, for that fatal mixture of alcohol and gasoline.

The National Highway Safety Bureau is financing numerous state projects involving the training of personnel in blood-alcohol testing, and in the procurement of the necessary testing equipment. Since the passage of the Highway Safety Act some fifteen states have adopted statutes permitting tests of drivers suspected of being drunk, or have improved existing laws, and some twenty states have adopted implied consent statutes.

Drunken driving is one of America's worst enemies, and we at the Department of Transportation fully intend to do all we possibly can to bring a halt to this most insidious killer.

In a recent speech, Tom Mann -- your most capable association president -- outlined an excellent eight point program to cut the death toll on our highways. He called for a coordinated attack centered on vehicle safety, highway design, roadside hazards, drunken driving law enforcement, vehicle maintenance, emergency medical service, pedestrians, motorcycles and railroad crossings.

I thoroughly agree with Tom's statement that all of these potential hazards must be treated as part of an interlocking system for automotive safety. It would be ridiculous to focus the bulk of our attention on only one or a few of these areas. We have to attack on all fronts simultaneously. We want to work with you. We want you to work with us.

With your continuing leadership and our assistance, this Nation can achieve substantial gains in automotive safety. You have it within your power to make safety as fashionable as speed, comfort, and beauty. The opportunity to do so will be seized by leaders possessed of a vision beyond today's production schedules and profit margins.

I urge you to join with the President and me in creating this future. I am confident that you will do so, and that together in the next years we shall perfect a system of transportation that is fully responsive to the needs of the American people.

Again, let me thank you for inviting me here this evening. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to meet with such an outstanding group, and look forward to working closely with all of you in the months and years ahead.

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