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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN TRANSPORTATION, AT THE PITTSBURGH HILTON IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, MONDAY, MARCH 10, 1969, 9:30 A.M.

Greetings --- I am delighted to be here to keynote your Fourth International Conference on Urban Transportation. Few topics are of more timely concern in this country, for transportation is the vital element in the making of more productive and progressive cities.

Very few issues in America today are being watched more intensely.

Certainly President Nixon is aware of the cities' needs for more effective transportation of people and goods -- transportation which meets all our human needs. He made his position perfectly clear during the campaign and has repeated his concern to me many times since.

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It is the President's determination, as it is mine, to confront the crisis of the cities boldly, to provide leadership which dares to rock the boat; leadership which acts upon the premise that transportation is totally related to welfare, education, recreation, and all other aspects of urban life.

As Chairman of the Transportation Committee of the President's Urban Affairs Council, I pledge to you today that the problems of transportation into, out of, and within urban centers will be met and resolved from a national perspective.

To do this means our thinking will have to change in many areas. It means we shall have to admit that often the "tried and true" is obsolete and fallacious. It means that we must stop passively worshipping our machines and start to master them. It means we can no longer assume that we are obligated to fit the people to the machines. We need imagination, we need creativity ... and most of all, we need motivation and implementation.

This Nation, the greatest Nation in the world, has proven we can send three men around the moon in seven days. Now let's show that we have the brains to move people from the Golden Triangle to the Allegheny County Airport in seven minutes. We can do it, and we will do it!

We know that the responses of the past simply will not lead to the solutions we want in the future. Conditions prove that to be true. We must re-examine our preconceptions if we are to prevent the centers of our cities, and eventually the suburbs from choking to death.

We are going to examine every kind of transportation and find out what kind of job each is best suited for. For one given purpose, that grand old American institution -- the automobile -- may be best. For other purposes, we might try V/STOLs, steamships, gravitrains, hydrofoils, or tracked air-cushion vehicles.

As the Nation's new Secretary of Transportation, I firmly hold that no one mode is going to dominate the future in this country, because I know and you know that no one mode is best for all purposes. Our population is too dense in some areas, too sparse in others.

Our needs are too complex for simple answers. The conventional modes, like the automobile for instance, suffer from the liability that the more we expand our highways, the more crowded those highways become.

The rumbling of discontent among the people is becoming louder. I cannot believe that in the year two thousand some 280-million urban citizens will put up with anything resembling today's conditions.

If we are wise, if we want to stop the commuting American from being the complaining American, we will start now -- in this administration -- to re-examine obsolete thinking and start to think in terms of the real needs and potentials of the present.

For instance, I find that more and more responsible people -- independent observers -- are questioning the survival of the automobile in the centers of our largest cities.

In New York City today, to take perhaps the worst case, traffic moves an average of six miles per hour versus eleven miles per hour in the pushcart era of 1917. Off-street parking, computerized traffic flow and changes in patterns of use are often suggested but more often than not they are only stopgap measures.

The costs of pollution, sprawl, ugliness, business decay, tax losses -- these are not worth the small gains. America must now accept the fact that the private automobile will not forever be the absolute monarch of our core cities.

How and when this change will come about, we cannot yet say. But the means are not altogether obscure.

We could make mass transit so attractive that habitual drivers would leave the highways. Some are convinced that dial-a-bus and other personalized modes will provide a breakthrough.

We could tax cars entering the city in order to pay for police services, traffic control, parking, road repair, and so on.

More and more, the hallowed right to jump into our cars and drive them anywhere we please is being tallied against other community and individual values -- the need for elbow room, clean air, stable neighborhoods, more parkland, and many others. So far, we have sought sheer mobility above every other consideration; other needs have been neglected, and the social equation is clearly out of balance.

I maintain that the abuse of the human environment can be stopped by using transportation as a major tool in regional planning.

It will be a policy of the Department of Transportation during this administration that any mode of transportation that commandeers or violates large sections of the landscape is going to be subject to a brutal analysis. Land is too precious a resource to be squandered. We can't always find enough of it where we need it, and it's one thing science doesn't have a substitute for. Multiple use of transport corridors is an obvious solution, and will ensure overall community development at very little more cost for land acquisition than we pay for ordinary highways and transit lines. Cities, whole regions, are now finding that they must plan their growth, control it, even in some cases, reduce it. They will have to decide consciously, not by default, what kind of places our people will live, work, and play in. And in that context, I would like to take this opportunity here this morning to announce a new D.O.T. program -- the Center Cities Transportation Program -- which I know will be of great interest to all of you.

We have concluded -- and I am sure that a great many people in this room have come to the same conclusion -- that the real transportation problem in the Center Cities is not congestion, parking and air pollution per se. Rather, the problem is that no one has been successful in solving the problems of congestion, parking and air pollution.

As I noted earlier, this Nation has the technical capability. What we haven't had is the effective implementation of this capability.

The reason for this lack of effectiveness -- and again, I think you will agree -- is the lack of an action program for implementation. The Center Cities Program is such an action plan.

To state the case bluntly, the failure in finding solutions to the transportation problems of the Center City areas has been one of not getting the many varied interest groups in the cities' power structures to work together.

You know and I know that the filing cabinets in mayors' offices are filled with unrealized plans. Unrealized not because they weren't feasible -- but unrealized because they did not address the problem of gaining sufficient support from the private sector, from labor, from management, from the financial community, from the political structure, and from the traveling public. This we intend to do with the Center Cities Transportation Program.

The Department of Transportation -- through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration -- has signed a one-million, 461-thousand dollar contract with a group of the nation's top consulting firms -- led by A.D. Little, and including Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill; Real Estate Research Corporation and Wilbur Smith and Associates.

These firms, working as a consortium under the guidance of DOT, will provide to five selected cities a thorough and concise research and development effort to formulate improved center city transportation systems. The cities participating in the program will be Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Seattle, and Pittsburgh.

The consortium will -- in each city -- go beyond the traditional approach of research, analysis and recommendation. The program will actively involve many organizations and groups in each city.

Again, this is more than a planning program. It is an action program. I, personally, will not be satisfied with the performance of the consultant teams until they, through their work, light the spark of community involvement in each of the participating cities.

The Center Cities Transportation Program is set up to give a nudge to communities -- to draw all community elements together -- so decisions will be made by not only those who will administer new transit facilities, but also by those who will earn a living operating the system, those who will ride, those who have businesses in the area, those who will be involved in the financing, those who will manufacture the equipment, and those who are in political and governmental decision-making positions.

The benefits of such a program are manifold.

With five cities sharing development, expertise and information, the manufacturers of transit equipment will have delineated for them a much more positive market potential. Investors -- buyers of bond issues -- will know better what sort of rate to offer. Labor, in helping plan new systems, can be expected to work with us for the common good. Merchants and businessmen in center city areas -- by being involved in the study of traffic patterns and pedestrian distribution -- will know better what to expect in terms of economic growth. And the people -- the ones who really are the "lifeblood of urban society" -- will help these cities create central transportation systems that blend rather than clash with the human environment.

We are delighted that the mayors of the five cities have expressed initial enthusiasm for the program, and we look for it to become a major demonstration of what we can do if we all work together.

To me, this is money well spent.

To my way of thinking, these grants are only a first step. Over the coming decade we will spend billions on urban transportation.

It seems obvious to me that these public monies cannot be spent effectively except by developing solid, well-thought-out plans for air, rail and highway in conjunction with the rest of the social structure -- housing, utilities, schools, and so on.

We must clarify the options for cities, encourage them to develop comprehensive plans, and give industry some notion of the potential market for their products.

We will have to invest a great deal of money to make up for past neglect. We will need new methods to finance the new systems of tomorrow. Trust funds set up by user taxes may be the answer in some cases; in others, federal subsidies may be more realistic. Our attitude should be flexible.

Perhaps we should expect to subsidize those who cannot drive -- you know who I mean -- the young, the aged, the poor, the handicapped. And those who are able to drive but prefer to avoid the aggravation and take a bus or train should also be given a choice.

We have the resources and the technology to provide these choices. Whether we provide them will determine the prospects for a decent life in the United States. How we decide them will determine the quality of our civilization.

The integrated transportation network that President Nixon and you and I dream of cannot be created overnight. But a system providing channels of choice out of the ghetto to suburban factories, insuring ready access in our leisure time to the varied pleasures of the countryside, safeguarding our precious heritage of historical sites and natural beauty, and saving the land from irresponsible exploitation -- such a system must be started now if we are to achieve our objective within the next generation. It may even be necessary for physical survival.

The task is gigantic, but no more so than the challenges of a century ago when stout-hearted pioneers tamed a savage continent with their bare hands. Sometimes we forget that we have a tradition -- a sacred one -- of achieving the impossible dream.

Our roads and rails and airways have given us greater mobility -- for all its frustrations -- than any other people have had in history. They have made the name of America synonymous with movement, change, and adventure. They have conditioned our mentality, formed our attitudes, opened new horizons to restless vitality.

It is the intention of this administration that transportation will continue to serve the fullest purposes of life in these United States. It must do so, for time is, indeed, running short. All our efforts -- especially at conferences such as this one -- must be aimed at the development of a national, integrated transportation system.

I am confident that your meetings and deliberations here in Pittsburgh will constitute a major step in the right direction.

Thank you.

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