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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY
OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE 17TH ANNUAL REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE, AT THE SHERATON PARK HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C.,
APRIL 16, 1969, AT 11:15 A. M.

It's always a pleasure to address a group of women -- and if they are all Republican women, the pleasure is doubled.

Women's dominant role in the field of transportation is well established by legend.

There is an old country tale about a little boy who came crying into the house, "Mommy ran over my bike with her car!"

His father was unsympathetic. "That's what you get for leaving it on the front porch."

Now I knew I wouldn't be able to come over here today and just toss off a few jokes about women drivers, so I checked with our experts at the National Highway Safety Bureau. I asked them for a few facts on the relative merits of women drivers versus men drivers. I'll read you their answer: "The data you have requested cannot be quantified in sufficient volume to permit a statistically valid response at this time." In other words, "Mr. Secretary, you must think we're nuts!"

Ladies ... all kidding aside, let me say again what a genuine pleasure it is to be here with all of you today. It's been far too long since the

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Republican Womens' Conference has met here in Washington and had the pleasure and satisfaction of a very special message from the White House -- and believe me, now that we're here, we intend to stay around for quite some time!

As yesterday's speakers -- as well as those who preceded me here this morning -- have no doubt pointed out, this Administration has a very special commitment to the American people. This Administration was elected to office by the many millions of Americans who don't represent special interest groups, who don't try to disrupt the orderly process of government, who don't advocate lawlessness and violence.

The Nixon Administration is here in Washington because the people wanted a government in which they could have confidence ... a government pledged to check runaway inflation, a government not given to false promises ... in short a government of "realities" that neither over-pledges nor under-produces.

The commitment of this Administration is, simply, to restore greatness to America. As I attend Cabinet meetings, as I administer the functions of the Department of Transportation, as I meet with and work with my colleagues on the Urban Affairs Council, I find more and more every day that this is an Administration dedicated to crisis prevention, and not to crisis management. I submit that President Nixon's performance in these first seventy-five days bears this out.

I admire the fact that politics has taken a back seat to statesmanship -- the best example being the reforms within the Post Office Department.

In the area of national security, the President stood up against some loud voices and asked Congress for a defense for the American deterrent -- threatened by the enormous strides in Soviet weaponry in recent years. This step was taken despite strong opposition, and it took courage to make it. The A-B-M decision -- I can assure you -- was made by the President only after careful study of all the facts at hand. "Safeguard" is precisely what the name implies, a safeguard against nuclear war.

I know -- as you do -- that he is providing leadership through the Department of Justice to combat the insidious increase in crime that has plagued the land.

He has recognized and has brought to national attention the malnutrition crisis;

He has proposed some of the toughest mine-safety legislation ever sent to Congress;

He has moved to reorganize the entire poverty program -- from top to bottom.

He is a President who levels with the people, who trusts the people, and who inspires trust and confidence in return.

Standards are high; excellence is the norm; decency and dignity are the rule.

While some might say we have not moved fast enough -- that things aren't really very different, only the faces have changed -- I sense in Washington and in the Nation an emerging Republican identity.

This identity is not keyed to any great public relations effort; we don't have quickly-introduced programs, with equally off-the-cuff slogans to describe our goals. No, we have more than this. We have new and responsible leadership that has known for many months that the way to prosperity and peace in America is through calm, reasonable and efficient excellence. Believe me, ladies, this Administration cares what the people of America think -- is working to find the solutions to America's most pressing problems -- seeks the advice of all those who are responsible citizens -- and will answer major challenges with measured response.

While perhaps it is true that we are still in the midst of proving ourselves to the Nation and the world, I would submit to you today that America now has leadership to match the challenge of the times.

And the fact that the leadership carries the bold banner of the Republican Party, is good enough evidence for me that the American people want to utilize the great untapped resources of individualism and inner strength that have characterized this nation since the days of the Founding Fathers.

It is a basic tenet of our Republican creed that big government is not the only answer to all the problems facing the country. We hold firmly to the belief that all Americans -- working together in their towns and cities, in their states and at all levels of concern -- can do much to meet the challenges of our day. We believe that dedicated citizens, moving forward together, represent a great reservoir of strength and faith. And now -- in the fledgling days of this new Administration -- we see this faith being put to work. We are moving out to meet the challenges.

You have asked me to come here this morning to comment on the new programs and goals of the Nixon Administration.

And while I would like to take up my time just to urge you on -- to get you out organizing and working to bring about a great many Republican congressional and state victories in 1970 -- I also want to make at least a few points today as the Secretary of Transportation and bring to your attention the challenges and opportunities that lie within this field.

Now transportation to many of us may mean only a trip in the station wagon down to the shopping center -- or a Sunday drive. But transportation is, in truth, the very basis of our Twentieth Century civilization. The presence or absence of good transportation determines how well we eat, where we work, where we live, how we enjoy our liberty, and how we pursue our happiness. Just about the most common manifestation of life is the ability to move around -- and nowhere is this more obvious than in the history of America.

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The right to personal mobility is part and parcel of our national fabric. It was that way during the age of the Western expansion, and it is that way now in the era of specialization and diversification.

And the fact is that transportation is in trouble.

First, consider our national population. America's population is about six thousand souls greater today than it was yesterday ... and we'll have another six thousand by this time tomorrow.

To me, this is significant by itself. But it must be considered beside its astonishing companion fact. The demand for transportation goods and services is increasing at an even faster rate than the population.

Tomorrow, April 17, we shall have ten-thousand more cars on the road than we do today. Tomorrow, the airlines will be carrying seven thousand more passengers than they did today. And this spectacular growth is common to almost all modes of transportation.

The Congress' challenge to the Department of Transportation is to provide "leadership in the development, direction and coordination of the principal transportation policies, functions and operations of the Federal Government."

This means our mission is to:

-- add another fifteen thousand miles of Interstate highways to 27-thousand miles already built;

-- provide air traffic control for 14-thousand flights a day;

-- adopt and enforce regulations to insure the safety of 150-million airline passengers;

-- set standards of safety to be followed in the manufacture of about 10-million automotive vehicles;

-- conduct some 45-thousand maritime search and rescue missions (That's right, the Coast Guard is part of D-O-T.);

-- set standards of highway safety affecting 100-million vehicles on the road today;

-- work with and assist the Nation's hundreds of mass transit systems and their six or seven billion passengers.

These are some of the requirements. Others call for operating the Alaska Railroad; providing naval support assistance in Vietnam; running the St. Lawrence Seaway; assisting and promoting high-speed trains; conducting oceanographic studies; operating one of the Nation's major airports; plus some hundreds of other requirements.

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These individual transportation challenges are each significant. They join together and become, in one area, however, a matter of special urgency.

About fifteen minutes after I started to work for President Nixon, I learned I was expected to do many jobs -- to wear many hats. When the President said he wanted his Cabinet officers to be generalists, he meant every word of it.

In one of his first actions, he created the Urban Affairs Council to provide him with policy guidance in the urgent task of revitalizing our cities. I am a member of that Council and chairman of the Council's Transportation Committee. Transportation in urban areas has become, thus, a matter of top priority in my Department.

It is an obvious fact of history that every major American city was created by and grew into importance because it offered advantages in transportation. Most of our large cities began as either ports or as railroad terminals, as trail or turnpike stops, or sometimes as canal towns. But all owed their existence to transportation. Yet today, the transportation crisis is one of the very factors contributing to our massive urban problems.

There is a saying in New York these days that the only way to get across town is to be born there. But downtown congestion is serious business. Traffic jams strangle local trade in the central business districts. They waste time and they are financially costly to business. Congestion contributes to the exodus of industry and trade from the city to the suburbs. Another factor is the daily auto commuter and his rush hour pile-up. He lives in the suburbs, pays no city taxes, yet his private car requires valuable city services. And the downtown freeways that carry him to his destination remove valuable income producing property from the tax rolls. Someone told me recently that the average commuter spends 13 percent of his waking hours each day staring at the car in front of him -- a phenomenal and tragic waste of time.

The major victims of city congestion, however, are the mass transit systems. The private auto has taken their passengers and traffic congestion has raised their operating expenses. This brings increased fares that result in a decrease of passengers which in turn brings about a decrease in service offered -- a very vicious cycle. While most forms of transportation are showing fantastic growth, our public transportation systems are losing passengers and money. I intend to see that this situation is corrected.

If this seems to be of only academic interest to you -- if you're tempted to say "well, automobiles are more convenient anyway," let me correct that impression right now.

In the United States, more than 80 percent of all families own at least one automobile. Yet half of all Negro households own no car at all. And more than half these Negro households have two or more wage earners who have to have some way to get from where they live to where they work.

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If they can't get to the jobs, they won't be able to work -- and if the opportunity to work is taken away, then all the social ills of our cities ghettos are compounded to an ever greater degree.

It is in America's best interests to provide channels of choice -- public transportation that is efficient, inexpensive, attractive and effective -- if we are to take a firm first step in solving the urban crisis.

I would ask you ladies here today -- to be aware of the crisis that we face in this area. And I would note that if we are to come up with solutions, then we are going to have to make a large number of decisions -- both at the Executive level, in the Congress, and at the State and local level.

The decisions will be of major proportions. They will have to rest on a firm foundation of alert and enlightened public opinion.

So as you are involved in politics -- as you are dedicated to the Republican Party -- I would urge that you also gain an especially solid grasp on the problems that face the Nation; problems that our party can and will solve with the help of people such as you in each of the fifty states ... in all of our hundreds of cities, and thousands of towns.

America can move forward together ... only if America can move at all.

I think I can best sum up the importance of our jet planes, our automobiles, our ships at sea, our trains -- the importance of all transportation, in fact, with a particularly telling quotation. It was written by the British author and statesman, Thomas B. Macaulay. His words are, "Of all inventions -- the alphabet and the printing press alone excepted -- those inventions which have bridged distance have done most for the civilization of our species."

Our task then is to bridge these distances between us.

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