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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION OF THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA, AT THE WASHINGTON HILTON, IN WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 17, 1969, 2:00 P. M.

It's a distinct pleasure -- to be here with the AGC. I'm extremely flattered that you saw fit to invite me -- an "Outsider" -- to make the opening address at this Golden Anniversary convention. But even as an "Outsider," I do admit to having been a part-time contractor not too long ago. Of course I have no regrets about leaving the industry -- I just don't want any of you fellows coming around later telling me how good business is!

During these first few months living and working in Washington I've found that there are many advantages, but there are a few drawbacks as well. For instance, I had to go to the office today, March 17 ... and any of you good Irishmen know that up in Boston today's a legal holiday, and if I'd kept my old job, I could have gone down to South Boston and marched in the St. Patrick's Day Parade!

Speaking of holidays, we have another one up in Massachusetts that -- so far, anyway -- isn't legally observed down here, and that's Columbus Day, October 12th. But I think that with both John Volpe and Vince Lombardi in Washington now .. the Sons of Italy may end up with as strong a lobbying team as the contractors have!

Let me say at the outset ... before this group of dear friends ... how fortunate this administration is to have the services of Frank Turner as Federal Highway Administrator.

He enjoys a reputation that cannot be surpassed. He has qualifications that are unquestioned.

If we are to have a highway system in this country, I want for us to have the best. That's why we have the best highway expert I know as our FHWA Administrator -- Frank Turner.

Before getting to my main speech, here's a news "bulletin" which I am certain will be received with good cheer.

As the result of a meeting I had this morning with other top ranking officials of the Nixon Administration, I can report that there will be a stabilizing of the rate at which the states will be permitted to make new contract obligations in connection with the Federal Aid Highway Program. This will enable us to put an end to the stop-and-start, up-and-down policy that has caused so much concern and confusion in this vital area.

We are going to establish an orderly system for the release of federal funds to the State highway departments, on a quarterly basis, to bring about the stability that is needed so we can indeed move forward together for the orderly development of our national highway system.

Another subject will make news today -- which I know is of great interest to all of you.

There has been a tremendous amount of dissatisfaction -- not only in the construction industry, but also in government at State and local levels -- with the Federal Highway Administration's Interim Order 7-2.

Well, we have made some changes in 7-2.

I can tell you now that I have decided to replace the pre-qualification procedure for equal employment opportunity with a new procedure which will include in all advertised specifications the specific equal employment opportunity requirements of contractors and subcontractors.

The new procedure will strengthen the effectiveness of the equal employment opportunity program on Federal-Aid Highway work -- and is designed to achieve positive results. Since uniform requirements will exist, they will be more readily understood and can be more effectively enforced than the present requirements which may vary to some degree from contractor to contractor and from place to place.

In developing this procedure we have consulted with all interested parties, including representatives of your organization, the American Road Builders' Association, the American Association of State Highway Officials, the Operating Engineers International Union, the Department of Labor and the Congress. Let me make clear that this new procedure is in no way a lessening of our resolve to achieve equal employment opportunity in fact and to establish it as a way of life in the Federal Aid Highway Construction Program.

All we are changing is the procedure; we are not changing our commitment to equal employment opportunity. Let me also point out, however, that these uniform requirements are not carved in granite. Whenever we encounter equal opportunity problems in connection with particular kinds of projects or in particular geographical areas, they will be modified or supplemented to include specific affirmative action requirements designed to meet and overcome those problems.

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I'm facing much the same task as you. Our Department of Transportation has one of the lowest ratios of minority group employment in the Federal Government. We rank about fifth from the bottom -- counting all Departments and Agencies. I mean to change that -- in fact the change is already taking place.

The national policy of providing equal opportunity in employment for all persons regardless of race, religion, or national origin has been emphasized by every Administration since World War II. I mean to carry out the necessary actions to achieve fulfillment of that policy by contractors and subcontractors on DOT projects whether they be highways, airports, Coast Guard installations, subways or whatever.

Minority groups in general -- and Negroes in particular -- need training to become qualified as skilled workers. I ask you to provide that training -- wherever it is needed -- whenever it is needed -- whether it be pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, on the job or through upgrading or promotional activities.

I am heartened to see that training programs have been established by some of you. By our latest count, there are 20 training programs, mostly to train equipment operators, in 16 states. The AGC role in the development of these programs is evident and should be commended. I submit to you that this country can only move to a better order of things if 100% of the people move forward. For if they do not, 85% of this great country will surely move backward.

Let me tell you briefly if I may, something about the Department of Transportation in terms possibly, of a contract -- the requirements we in the Department must meet to perform the contract. Knowing you fellows, I'm sure you'll be making estimates on the back of an envelope. And maybe you'll come up with a lower bid than mine. But I don't think I'm that rusty.

Here are the specs, then ... we have to ---

--- Help build nearly 15,000 more miles of interstate highways -- to add to the 27,600 miles already completed.

--- Provide air traffic control for 14,000 airline flights a day -- a figure that is expected to triple in the next decade.

--- 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 45,000 maritime search and rescue missions.

--- 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 6 or 7 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 and operating two of the Nation's major airports (Washington National and Dulles). It is a requisite of these requirements that while fulfilling them, we must at the same time provide for a tremendously rising market.

As I am sure you have seen in the papers ... we are working now to develop the possibility of trust funds both for airport-airways development, and for urban mass transportation.

This group knows as well as any group in the country how much good has been derived from the highway trust fund -- which I was privileged to help inaugurate back in 1956.

Our position is that now -- in a time of pressing need -- we can accomplish similar good by setting up a sound, continuing program for financing new airports to relieve air traffic congestion, and for new mass transit facilities, and do this while leaving the highway trust funds untouched.

We are working to develop high speed inter-city rail transportation. The Metroliner between Washington and New York has enjoyed initial success, and will undoubtedly become even more popular once we provide one-stop -- or even non-stop -- service between these two great cities.

I am told, too, that we can expect the start of TurboTrain service from the Boston end of the Northeast Corridor by the first of April.

And as far as highways are concerned we are going to move ahead with the Interstate program not simply to complete the 42,500 miles authorized to date; we are also looking to the future -- trying to allocate priorities for whatever expansion of highways will be necessary when the present basic network is completed in the mid-1970's.

So you see, the contract calls for continued updating of our goals. Those are the specifications. And if you have been tallying those up on scratch paper, let me just say this: I have to bring that contract in for less than \$8 billion and I'm not sure that's enough for the coming year.

I have been giving you these facts for one purpose. If I'm to be the contractor, then I'm going to need a good strong lineup of subcontractors on this job. Millions of them. Concerned and dedicated Americans -- and you friends here today are among the leading contenders.

I want you to know what needs to be done, and what your government is doing.

A few days after his inauguration, President Nixon established within the government -- the Urban Affairs Council and assigned to it the priority task of determining how the Federal Government might best help to solve the problem of our cities. As Secretary of Transportation, I am a member

of that Council and also chairman of its Transportation Committee. And here is where I am hoping you and I can work together.

The past two decades have seen a rapid expansion of our urban population. The technological revolution in agriculture, among other factors, has prompted 20 million rural Americans to migrate to the cities. Many of these -- of course, have migrated from the rural South to the urban North. Yet in the face of this increasing urban population, the transportation systems that serve this group have found themselves in increasingly difficult straits.

How many times during the past year has your own local bus company been on the front page with stories of financial difficulties and fare increases? Every day railroads report new financial losses on their commuter services and the plight of the Long Island Railroad has become a national joke. (To me, it's pretty grim humor.)

In a cause-and-effect connection, our cities have seen their downtown traffic jams get worse.

Let me just point out that the average commuter-driver spends about 13 percent of his waking hours each workday staring at the car in front of him -- an effort that must rank among the greatest wastes of human talent in the history of mankind. Some of our urban highways are becoming saturated. Many are past saturation. Any increase in the number of vehicles using them will have serious consequence.

There is, again, the shrinking capacity of transportation between the cities themselves. Five of our major airports have reached saturation. These five airports, three in New York City, one in Chicago and one here in Washington, are serving a million and a half passengers every week. Last year, these same five airports handled an incredible one million, seven hundred thousand airline takeoffs and landings.

These urban transportation crises are, in themselves serious enough. But combined with another urban problem, their effect is disastrous. Let me point out to you -- now -- how transportation is directly tied in with the number one problem in our cities today. For a resident of New York's Harlem to commute by public transportation to an aircraft job in Farmingdale, Long Island, costs \$40 a month. Right here in Washington we have a similar situation ... where a resident of the core city with a job at Bethesda at the National Institutes of Health ... must travel for an hour and a half each way going to and from work ... at a cost of about \$30 a month.

The Watts section of Los Angeles is only 16 miles from the employment center of Santa Monica. To make the trip by public transportation, however, takes an hour and 50 minutes each way, requires three transfers and costs \$33 a month.

Here, again, it is a matter of the problem expanding faster than our capability for resolving it.

As Secretary of Transportation, and as a member of the President's Urban Affairs Council, I know only too well that one of the reasons we have an urban crisis is because ghetto residents are unable to travel from their homes to their jobs.

I know only too well that lack of proper public transportation has been a contributing factor to the dilemma in our cities today, and I mean to do my part in correcting this injustice.

For that reason, I've called upon some of the foremost experts in urban problems to work with me in developing new transportation systems that are realistic and meaningful.

We have created a new assistant secretaryship at the upper echelons of the Department -- the Assistant Secretary for Urban Systems and Environment. The President and I were extremely fortunate to recruit one of the nation's leading Mayors for this post, Mayor Dorm Braman from Seattle.

Mayor Braman will bring to his new assignment a full and total understanding of urban problems ... will be able to relate them to our challenges in transportation ... and will work closely and diligently with our Urban Mass Transit Administrator, Carlos Villarreal as well as Federal Highway Administrator Frank Turner.

Our Department is pledged to get things moving again, and I am confident that these men will give us a good launching pad for creativity. But once we have provided the impetus, the start, the seed money for valid projects -- the atmosphere in this nation must be such that the programs are carried forward by their own momentum.

You men here today are the builders of America. You create. You have a constructive spirit. President Nixon has emphasized the need for this spirit. In an interview with the New York Times, he said "This is a time for builders, not destroyers. This is a time for reconstruction, not revolution."

My friends, we need here the abilities, the talent and the dedication of millions of Americans. This is our plan. And again President Nixon has said it best. In a speech on June 27th of last year, he said: "To make its expanded democracy work, America will need the willing hands of millions of individual people -- proclaiming by their deeds that moral identity which is the rock our freedom rests on. America will need their involvement. It will need their ideas and their energies."

And so, my friends, it is up to you. I want you all to help us build a better America. The decision is yours. For my part, I have not the slightest doubt how you will act.

Thank you.

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