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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, BEFORE THE NORTH COMMISSION MEETING, AT THE HOTEL AMERICA, WASHINGTON, D.C. MONDAY, APRIL 28, 1969, AT 1:30 P.M.

When Secretary Hickel asked me to come over here and talk with you briefly this afternoon, I eagerly agreed. My first thought was that I could relax talking to people from a state where the worst transportation problem is supposed to be getting your engine started.

But recently I discovered that Alaska has a congestion problem too -- caused by the traffic in visiting senators.

Incidentally, that remark about getting your engine going shows how easy it is for us to slip into cliches when talking about Alaska. Here is a land on the verge of economic take-off, rich in human and natural resources, ready to assume an expanded place in the world, but hindered by its fictional reputation as a land covered with ice and nurtured on sourdough.

I am glad to see that the North Commission is trying to stamp out this image, because -- to be factual -- it has no bearing on the present and damages the potential of the Nation.

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I notice that our major competitors in the Arctic, the Soviets, have long since abandoned the "frozen wasteland" concept and have been vigorously developing Siberia since the end of the war. Their trans-Siberian Railroad, as a matter of fact, was completed nearly seventy years ago, whereas our Alaska Railroad was not started until about 1915 and never really went as far as Congress intended.

Even in this abbreviated form, however, the Alaska Railroad has played a major role in developing the resources of the state to their present level.

Today about seventy-five percent of Alaska's gross state product is produced within the rail belt and is directly dependent upon it. Two-thirds of its population is also centered there. The Railroad employs 850 people itself and dispenses a payroll of nine million dollars per year. It has made possible the development of a number of industries and has eased the construction of military bases. It has pioneered in containers, piggybacking, and use of freight cars on barges. The list of benefits is endless. The potential of the line for further development is recognized by this Department and we intend to make full use of that potential.

There are many things a railroad can do better than any other kind of transportation, and this is especially obvious when you consider the problems of the area to the north and west of our present terminus, as your Commission has been diligently doing for two years now. It should be clear from recent mineral discoveries that this part of your State, the largest section of our country without surface transportation, will not forever remain outside the economic mainstream.

Not, that is, with the kind of talk I hear about Alaska these days. One thing about Alaskans -- you have a great attitude. I'll never forget the northwoods tale about the grizzled prospector who suddenly ran into a Kodiak bear rearing up across his path. "Lord," said the old man, "if you're on the bear's side, let him finish me off fast. If you're on my side, give me a victory I can be proud of. But if you're neutral, just lean back and watch the best damn bear fight you ever saw."

Alaska is obviously more than a State -- it is a State of mind as well.

History proves that the booster spirit is money in the bank. It helped us develop an entire continent in less than a century when Tom Jefferson said it would take a millennium. We ran railroads in every direction and we followed up with highways and airways. However, each part of our transportation network was created without much concern for how it fit into the overall pattern of transportation services. In fact, too much coordination was discouraged by law. No one was appointed to watch over the system as a whole.

The casual approach worked well in a time of small-to medium populations, a relatively low rate of mobility, low incomes, and recreation patterns centered around the home. Now, all that has changed. The demand for transportation of

all kinds is growing geometrically with the size of the nation and the wealth and sophistication of its people. Everybody wants instant mobility, but this kind of service can't be provided for long -- or at all -- with the poorly integrated network that we have inherited from the past.

In fact, here in the "lower forty-eight" we are faced with the threat of paralysis, not just inconvenience. Statistics show almost unbelievable increases in all the indices of passenger and freight movement over the next ten years and beyond.

The volume of auto traffic over the next eight years should increase by about forty percent and the three-car family will be the dominant trend. Commercial-passenger trips by air will expand an incredible three hundred percent during the next six years. The railroads will carry twenty-five percent more freight in 1975 than they do now. Trucking will increase ton-mileage by fifty percent. Moreover, because of huge new planes, containerization and trade reforms, the flow of goods and people overseas will double in ten years. This is more than prosperity -- it's an explosion that is going to blow away a lot of obsolete practices in the transportation industry.

Our responsibility is to prepare for this traffic now so as to prevent it from degenerating into one gigantic tangle of cars, planes, barges, trucks, and trains. We can prevent a breakdown only if we take a national view, an intermodal view of the problem.

The Department of Transportation was established by Congress to do just that, and to assist the modes in linking up with each other efficiently at all the major points of exchange in this country. Our goal is to make intermodal planning and systems thinking respectable and workable.

We have to demonstrate that transportation is a powerful tool in the economic development of whole regions. We cannot ignore its potential; we must use it wisely and get a maximum social and economic return for our investment. The North Commission is obviously well aware of these considerations. Therefore, it is our intention to assist you in every possible way to establish a modern, orderly, efficient, and modally integrated system of transportation for the State of Alaska.

Our commitment is unmistakable. The Alaska Railroad carried one million, four hundred eighty-one thousand, four hundred sixty-seven tons of freight in fiscal 1968 alone, and it has not even begun to reach its potential.

Since 1956, the Federal Highway Administration has invested 290.2 million dollars for primary and secondary roads in your state, and has authorized or underway projects worth an additional sixty-one million dollars. The FAA tells a similar story -- they have announced for Fiscal Year 1969 an allocation of five million, thirty thousand, three hundred sixty-five dollars for airports in Alaska, including funds for Anchorage International Airport and for the initial federal role in the new Ketchikan Airport.

Incidentally, I see that a total of twenty-four packed-snow landing strips have been built on the North Slope where, prior to the discovery of oil, there were only four -- so you now have air congestion even in this remote place.

Obviously, Alaska has not and will not be ignored by the Department of Transportation. I am confident that we will work together closely over the next few years. We have common concerns. I submit that we can make transportation do much more for our society than merely take people downtown and shove packages from one side of the country to another. That is an obsolete, pre-systems concept. Properly designed transportation can ensure that poor people get access to jobs. It can actually safeguard instead of ruin our irreplaceable heritage of fields and forests, wildlife, natural wonders, and the great places of American history.

States like Alaska that have not been ravaged thus far by man have a moral duty and a timely opportunity to preserve their natural environs for the benefit of all of us. Long-range transportation planning can help them do this. It would be a pity if in thirty to forty years Alaska came to look like the Northeast Corridor, where we have an uphill struggle to preserve the remnants of a decent life for our citizens and still give them the mobility they need in their personal and professional lives.

I am sure Governor Hickel would agree with me that the so-called "unplanned consequences" of modern transportation can make progress very expensive indeed. Alaska can do without such fringe benefits, and with your help she can avoid them.

I'm an optimist about the future. First of all, I sense a new awareness in this country, a new concern that transportation should serve a variety of social objectives and should be a major instrument of environmental planning. This proves to me that we are becoming more mature as a people. Until now, however, Government and industry have not responded fully to the new climate of opinion.

Over the next few years, we will have to invest much more public and private money in making transportation work effectively for all our people. We need to develop a spirit of cooperation. We need careful planning, research, and imagination to offset the problems inherent in massive populations, rampant technology, urbanism, and changing values. If we think we have troubles now, they are nothing compared to what will hit us if we fail to adjust our patterns of thought and act accordingly.

This Administration is fully committed to action to prevent the transportation problems of today from becoming the transportation disasters of tomorrow. President Nixon has noted the challenge and has vowed that we will not flinch from our responsibility.

President Nixon has made it very clear to the Nation -- during the first quarter of this year -- of new leadership -- that we are once again a nation that stands strong and fast and in the forefront of the free world.

He has made progress toward peace: At Paris, in Vietnam, and behind the scenes.

He is working to hold down the cost of living by proposing a budget that cuts Federal spending by some 4-billion dollars.

He is the leader of a responsible government that does not shy from decision-making.

He has displayed solid leadership in national security -- and let me tell you, my friends -- and you live closer to the Soviet Union than any of the rest of us do -- the "Safeguard" anti-ballistic system is just what the name says. It safeguards our deterrent forces, and it is a program that I firmly believe in.

I mention these facts to you today because I know you agree that the times demand nothing less than sound leadership.

I appreciate the leadership the President is giving in the field of transportation. You may have noted, in his budget message -- that he rated airport/airways development and urban mass transportation in his list of "top-ten" domestic priorities.

With solid backing from the White House, I know that many of the problems and issues we have discussed here today will see a bright future.

I urge you as concerned and influential citizens to give us your support in providing the kind of transportation system that will help to assure a better life for ourselves and the generations ahead.

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