



DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

4 X 6 card.  
10j  
February  
form - 2200  
NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

5-S-71

EXCERPTS OF REMARKS FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, GRAND BALLROOM, CONRAD HILTON HOTEL, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1971, 12:30 P.M.

Let me -- at the outset -- bring you the greetings of the President. He sends his best wishes for a successful meeting. As you well know, he is keenly interested in transportation -- perhaps more so than any other President in this century. He clearly demonstrated this interest and concern by submitting to Congress -- and successfully achieving -- major legislative programs for aviation, public transit, railroads and highways. He understands your needs and the peoples' needs; he recognizes the necessity for full-range, long-term planning if we are ever going to successfully match resources with demands.

And I must say that reflecting on that great State of the Union message, his understanding of our other many needs is clearly evident.

It is a bold new program, containing some monumental solutions to some of the problems now facing this country. Let me comment briefly on two aspects that relate to transportation. First -- the proposed new system of sharing Federal revenues with state and local governments. This would be a financial

transfusion that can save our Federal system and bring new strength to Government at the grassroots level, Government that you and I know is best qualified to judge and respond to the needs of the people.

Included in the proposal is \$11 billion in so-called "special revenue sharing" for specific areas such as transportation but without the narrow program restrictions that have applied in the past. The converting of some of our categorical grants to block grants is most definitely in line with our initiatives over the past two years in the direction of giving states and communities greater flexibility through a single transportation trust fund.

Closely related is the matter of Government re-organization. Some people -- even the so-called "Bureaucrats" in my own shop -- have gotten a little nervous over some of the reports about re-organization. But let me make my position crystal clear. Re-organization -- as the President has outlined it -- is simply another step toward integrating transportation into the basic fabric of our lives.

I do not see the President's proposal constraining what we are now doing. On the contrary, I think it will accelerate directions in which we are already moving.

And let me say, Gentlemen, we are moving! Last year, our Department had its best year ever! Five major transportation Bills were passed by the Congress. And most of them passed by overwhelming odds. Each of you, I am sure, is aware of at least a few of these measures. But let me list them for you, just to refresh your memory. We have the Airport-Airways Act, the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act, the Rail Safety Bill, the Rail Passenger Service Bill, and -- in the final days of the 91st Congress -- the new Highway Bill.

Now these are all mighty important pieces of legislation, and I am deeply appreciative of the work everyone in the transportation fraternity did in getting them through. But, frankly, I see them only as a beginning. We still have a lot

of hard work that is going to require the very best efforts of both industry and Government.

There is an immediate need, first of all, for better industry-labor relations throughout the transportation industries.

Yesterday at noon the President sent a special message to Congress proposing transportation labor legislation, the "Emergency Public Interest Protection Act."

The proposed legislation calls for establishment of a procedure by which both sides in a labor dispute would submit their best final offer to a neutral, three-member panel. The panel would then select, without alteration, what is deemed the most reasonable offer. This would become the final, binding settlement of the dispute.

This measure deserves your full support.

Another major job before us is our Transportation Needs Study, scheduled for completion in 1972 with an updating every two years thereafter. This total Needs Study is far broader than the traditional "Highway Needs Studies" of past years. It will pinpoint transportation demand in detail for periods of 10 and 20 years ahead. It will not be simply a classical projection, by mode, of how heavy traffic will be in year "X". It will not be pegged exclusively to the modes as we know them. Our aim is to accommodate the doubling of freight and passenger loads in the next two decades -- regardless of where the modal chips may fall. We want to know the general needs so we will be able to recommend specific responses. At the same time we are paying close attention to the environmental impact of transportation demand in the realms of safety, pollution, noise, land use, and conservation of human and natural resources. No true transportation system will fail to take close account of these once-hidden, but now obvious, social costs of mobility.

Relocation housing is a case in point. We have made it a firm policy, for instance, that no one will be thrown out on the street just so we can build more streets. Replacement housing is a factor in transportation development.

No national transportation policy or needs study can succeed without the input of citizens, state and local governments, regional planning bodies, and especially the industry itself. This is a national problem, and it must be solved in a national way.

Which brings me to another one of our immediate needs that is requiring -- and receiving -- the very best national expertise we have been able to find. I'm referring to our National Rail Passenger Service Corporation -- (call it "Railpax" if you must; we are in the process of looking for a better name.)

Passage of this legislation, and creation of the well-publicized quasi-public operating corporation, is bringing two very important results. First, we are helping ease the railroads' financial pinch by relieving them of the burden of passenger service. Second, we are giving the American travelling public the chance to prove, once and for all, whether or not they will patronize fast, clean, efficient, courteous safe rail transportation.

Our initial demonstrations with the Turbo-Train and Metroliner indicate that people will ride modern rail passenger vehicles.

The Corporation is already in full operation. The incorporators have been meeting practically around the clock since their confirmation by the Senate last month. I, on my part, have designated a basic system of 21 city pairs between which the Corporation shall provide rail service. That was no easy task. I announced our first preliminary plans on November 30, calling for only 16 city pairs. This resulted in my receiving more than 3,000 letters -- countless telephone calls and a parade of visiting dignitaries.

With vocal support such as that -- and with harder facts following deeper research -- we were delighted to be able to expand the system to a point where no region of the country is passed by.

The incorporators, meanwhile, are ready to begin negotiations with the railroads in operating contacts. They are shaping up a management team of top people; they are determined to make this Corporation work.

The new Corporation, I remind you, opens for business May first. We are working on a very tight deadline considering the scope of the operation.

I am certain that after initial "bugs" are eliminated, this country will have a true national system of rail passenger service.

I look upon this basic system, however, only as a beginning -- as a base from which the Corporation can expand as demand for fast, clean, safe and efficient service between metropolitan centers increases.

I have spent my time -- and yours -- up to this point with a combination "progress report" and "re-statement of basic goals." Progress is worth reviewing, and goals are worth remembering. In an "overview" sort of speech like this that is often the most one can be expected to do. But I would like to devote my remaining time to a somewhat narrower approach; and I trust that those of you for whom this is not immediately relevant will bear with me. For over the long run the relevance is very real and very dangerous, no matter what phase of transportation provides you a paycheck today.

There are two phases -- two aspects -- of transportation in America that pose definite threats. I use a word as strong as that only after two years of living with transportation day and night.

The first of these areas is the threat of urban congestion. Gentlemen, urban congestion is a threat to cities -- large and small -- in every state in this Nation.

Our obsession with the private car is destroying the quality of life in our urban areas.

I want one fact understood here. I fully appreciate the tremendous mobility and the subsequent tremendous independence the private automobile has given the average American family. I am also a firm believer in the value of our Interstate Highway System, and I am very proud that my first introduction to Federal Civil Service was as President Eisenhower's first Federal Highway Administrator. Notwithstanding all this, I fully recognize that excessive dependence on the auto is damaging transportation, damaging ourselves and damaging our urban areas.

The result of this total emphasis on private cars is that we have, in effect, deprived the inhabitants of our metropolitan areas any reasonable choices in the modes of transportation available to them. They have no alternatives. If they can't drive or don't own an automobile they are immobilized.

The increasing amounts of urban air pollution is another disastrous effect of this heavy auto traffic. A few weeks ago, Los Angeles found its air pollution had reached dangerous levels and had to call on its citizens to restrict driving. The advent of similar conditions in most of our major cities is only a matter of time.

Heavy auto traffic also represents inefficiency. It is an inefficient use of our highways and it impedes the pace of public transit. Heavy urban auto congestion is noisy and a potential safety threat to urban pedestrians. Finally, it involves all of us in a brutally vicious cycle: more people, with fewer alternatives, means more cars -- which require more roads -- which take more urban and suburban land off the tax rolls and away from housing, business, and recreation while bringing increased pollution and congestion. This -- very simply -- is a self-perpetuating disaster.

How do we fight this? New York City experimented with the closing of certain downtown areas to traffic and found that on the streets that were closed the carbon dioxide count fell by as much as 90 percent and the average noise level shrank from 78 to 58 decibels. In the financial district, a ban on private parking so opened the streets that it reduced bus and taxi trip time by an incredible 75 percent.

I shall this year, therefore, continue to urge mayors and other local officials to look to ways of both reducing urban auto driving and encouraging the use of public transit. I have stressed this point regularly to the League of Cities, to the Conference of Mayors, and I shall continue that appeal as long as the threat persists.

And, I shall be doing more than just urging and talking.

While details cannot be released at this time, I can say that we will shortly be taking a close look at the transportation situation in the Nation's Capital. This will be a comprehensive approach to the regional transportation needs of the entire metropolitan Washington area. The knowledge we have already tells us innovations must be made. And innovations will be made. This comprehensive analysis will, hopefully, set a pace and a precedent for other major cities of the Nation.

We will cope with this threat that has brought us all too close to urban suicide in all too many metropolitan areas. We shall most definitely make 1971 -- as one of the trade papers termed it -- "Year One of the Transit Revolution."

Now let me turn to the second area within which I -- and my policy people -- sense a distinct threat to national progress.

No nation of 200 million people that covers 3½ million square miles could possibly exist in this day and age without railroads.

I have already discussed the rail passenger problem, and our involvement there. What perhaps is not understood well enough by the general public is the impending crisis in rail freight. We have simply too much bulk freight, too great a flow of raw materials, too huge a gross national product to conceive of the death of our rail system. Yet we have allowed ourselves to come dangerously close to that fatal point. The fact that \$100 million of our \$125 million loan guarantee program was snapped up by one railroad the first week it was available is proof of that. Bankruptcies, near-bankruptcies, archaic

equipment and outmoded regulatory practices are further indices of the problem. And we discovered -- during the one-day shutdown in December -- that with a nationwide cessation of rail service, the other modes would be hard put to carry even 15 percent of the traffic!

I see little value in going backwards or in assessing blame. Suffice to say, the deterioration of our railroads is a national tragedy. And this atrophy must end.

I shall, consequently, be initiating a series of programs and actions this year which will be designed to assist our railroads. These will cover the range from a series of new legislative proposals, new studies, and new research and development projects.

So -- just as this will be "Year One of the Transit Revolution;" this will also be the year in which the Federal Government moves in depth to get to the massive task of boosting rail freight up the priority rankings.

Gentlemen . . . there are other topics I could have touched on today. But I felt my time would be better spent in talking of the challenges and difficulties that lie ahead.

But in closing, I want one fact clearly understood and remembered. I have been at my desk in Washington for two years now, and I have come to know the people in the transportation industry. I have, consequently, a sizeable measure of confidence in our future. We have come a long way in the last 200 years, and the future is alive with opportunities for service yet undreamed of.

With your help, with our priorities in proper order, with clear policies and a clear direction, transportation can become the cutting edge of social and environmental progress in this country.

####