



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS, DISTRICT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1971, 7:00 p.m.

Thank you, Chairman Hahn. I very much appreciate the opportunity to address the Metropolitan Council of Governments this evening. I can't help remembering, as I stand before you, the old admonition to beware people bearing gifts. Well, I am not coming before you this evening bearing gifts. Rather, I come with ideas and concepts and dreams. As the President has said so eloquently, now is the time for a driving dream. Now is the time to stop asking what can't be done, and to go out and do what can be done. For what can be done, must be done.

I am tired of studies and projections and more studies and more projections. I am tired of those who consider the means the end, who produce dire predictions because they are unable to produce viable solutions. I am here this evening to bring you the personal commitment of the President to solving the transportation problems of this region. I am here this evening to offer you my aid, and that of my Department, in finding sophisticated solutions to your transportation problems. I am here tonight to offer you proposals which will turn the Washington Metropolitan area

into a transportation model for the Nation. As Government must be responsive to the people, so too must the programs Government initiates be tailored to the needs of the people. This is a subtle point, but an important one. The people articulate their needs in terms of a problem. The Government must respond in terms of the best solution, not just any solution.

There exists a special relationship between the Federal Government and the Washington Metropolitan region. It is a relationship born of mutual needs and, to a certain extent, mutual desires. I could also say that it is selfishness which brings me here this evening. When I call a member of my staff, I want him on the other end of the phone -- not in the middle of a traffic jam on Shirley Highway or stacked up above National.

There is more than an identity of interest, however, to support a Federal concern for this region. Washington is the Nation's Capital. Just its name has come to symbolize the power and purpose of this great Nation. This is no more only a city than the Star Spangled Banner is only a song. Every American, of every political persuasion, realizes that it is in Washington that he must be heard if he is to be heard at all. Likewise, to be successful in Washington is to have news of the success spread nationwide, even worldwide.

The realities are upon us. Less than five years from today this Nation begins its Bicentennial Celebration. Literally millions of people will visit this Country, and most will come to Washington. Millions of people coming to an area which barely manages to transport its own citizens to and from work each day.

Then, too, we in the Department are sponsoring next year at Dulles International Airport a magnificent international transportation exposition. We anticipate attendance will be in the millions.

I offer you our help, and ask for yours. The Council of Governments has a great responsibility, perhaps greater here than elsewhere in the Nation. You are unique. Your organization represents the widest range of Governmental jurisdictions of any Council of Governments in the Country.

And because of your uniqueness, it is the Council of Governments which must bear the major responsibility for regional transportation planning. Further, I have always believed that there can be no political boundaries to most problems. Rather, their boundaries should be the geographic area which is affected by that problem. Regional planning is essential.

Where do we go from here? It seems to me that the primary question we must always ask is whether or not the transportation job is being done in the most sophisticated and efficient fashion. Let's not, however, confuse sophistication with complexity. Sometimes the two feet that the good Lord gave us are the best way to get from one place to another. At other times, a seemingly old fashioned mode such as a bicycle is best. On occasion, new concepts barely off the drawing board, such as the Tracked Air Cushion Vehicle, are the answer. I ask only one thing, each solution must carry with it the authority of merit.

And as we look for merit, it is axiomatic in this complex world that we also look for balance.

The key words now, in Washington -- and throughout the Nation for that matter -- are "balanced transportation."

Much has been said about this subject here and throughout the Country. Much lip service has been given. We've all nibbled at the edges of the problem. We've approached it piecemeal. We've talked about all modes of transportation but we've never looked at the system as an integrated entirety.

After all, an airport is really of minimal value if you spend more time getting into the city than it takes you to fly from one city to another. A road can cause more problems than it solves if it fails to connect properly with other roads or bridges or if it simply causes massive congestion

by pouring automobiles into a downtown bottleneck. A subway will have few riders if stations aren't strategically located or lack sufficient parking facilities.

What I've been talking about is what we call "intermodalism" -- the interrelationship, the interdependence, the interplay between various modes of transportation -- air, tracked, ground and water. Intermodalism is the heart of a balanced transportation system. But so is safety. So is the preservation of our environment; preservation of historic sites; and the avoidance of hardships to families and disruption of communities affected by transportation construction.

In essence, what my Department will do is help you define, in specific terms, what a balanced transportation system is -- and should be -- for the Washington area. We will also aid, wherever possible, with grants for construction and study -- not study for study's sake -- but study aimed at producing tangible results. We will be discussing various alternatives particularly in the financial area. I just want to remind you that one alternative is to do nothing -- an alternative that is adopted, I must admit frankly, all too frequently, particularly in the Washington area. And we just cannot afford to do nothing.

The goals of our transportation effort must be many. I suggest that high on our list be the determination to restore the downtown streets and walkways of this city to the people who inhabit it and to the millions of Americans who will be visiting it.

It must be our plan to restore some sense of humanism to our downtown streets. Not his automobile, but man himself must continue to be the measure of all things. The city must be a gathering place for people, not vehicles.

And we must look to the plight of the commuter -- or as "Newsweek" recently put it, the agony of the commuter. There is no rational reason for his daily travels to and from work to be periods of tension, waste and frustration.

A third goal must be to improve the mobility of the poor, the handicapped, the very young and the aged -- all those who cannot afford or cannot operate private cars and must depend on public transit.

There must be urgency to our effort. The threat of dangerous air pollution grows more serious. In our area I point out, it is the emission from the internal combustion engine which is the number one cause of pollution. Industry and Government are cooperating in the development of cleaner engines but we have with us now a clear and present danger that demands our vigorous attention. Cooperative and voluntary planned action now may well prevent potential legal restriction later. The time may come when automobiles will be banned from the downtown area. I pledge to work hand in hand with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council on Environmental Quality in their efforts to deal with this critical threat not only to the quality of life but to life itself.

The cornerstone of our plan, consequently, must be the encouragement of an assistance to all forms of public transit -- the Metro, the bus system and the railroads.

It seems that on this point your Council and our Department of Transportation see eye-to-eye. I am happy to announce, consequently, that we are awarding the Council a grant of \$137,000 to help finance a study on how existing public transit can be improved and how this improved public transit could affect the transportation picture in the Washington area.

This grant will help the Council move forward with its overall comprehensive transportation plan as required by law.

I can give you some idea of how effective public transportation can be from the very exciting story of our Shirley Highway Project.

Prior to beginning the experiment with the exclusive bus lanes, the A,B&W Company during the morning rush hour was carrying about 1900 passengers into Washington over Shirley Highway. With the exclusive use of reversible lanes, plus an additional 1½ miles of busway, the company is now carrying 4,300 passengers in the morning rush hour.

We have set a target date of April first for opening the last 2½ mile segment of temporary busway into the District.

When the busway is fully operating we expect A,B&W to be carrying about 5,000 passengers. This is equivalent to the removal of about 3,500 cars from the traffic stream -- virtually the same number of cars that would be carried over two freeway lanes in an average hour of peak-hour traffic.

These exclusive bus lanes have given the bus passenger a faster trip. We expect this trip time to be further reduced with the introduction into service later this spring of the first of 30 new modernized buses.

As these first 30 buses prove themselves in increased ridership, we shall add two more increments of 30 buses each. This should result in a sizeable dent in traffic on Shirley Highway, and in the city.

It is imperative that we continue to upgrade our bus service. We simply cannot stand still while we wait for the Metro to be completed. Looking ahead to that completion date, however, I note that the success of the Metro will depend on an excellent feeder bus service. This will require a high degree of coordination and cooperation. There will be little efficiency gained if it should prove the reverse -- that the Metro would find itself in competition with the bus systems. Accordingly, this Administration supports appropriate action which would bring about integrated operations between the Metro and all the bus companies in the area.

I further suggest that buses be equipped with pollution-free engines. The Congress has ordered the creation of that engine by 1975, although I believe we will be able to buy some substantially before 1975.

We have already initiated a demonstration project -- and provided funds for the operation of five buses in Washington which are specially equipped with new emission control devices.

The District Government and our officials are also in agreement that alternatives beyond public transit must also be considered in the downtown area.

There is a need for a rational automobile policy.

I believe cities belong to people. Consequently, I would like to see the City Council of the District of Columbia develop an extensive program of pedestrian malls and plazas in the downtown area and in other parts of the city where people want and need to congregate in large numbers. One of these could be an expanded "F" Street Mall from which autos are eliminated during daytime hours. Truck deliveries could be made in early morning or evening hours.

I had an opportunity last fall to walk down "F" Street during the experimental automobile restriction and it was a most pleasant experience.

If such an enlarged auto-free pedestrian mall is established in downtown Washington, I would be very interested in having the Department help finance a mini-bus system to move shoppers through it.

To assist the District in the large endeavor of finding prompt answers to pollution and congestion, we will mobilize our resources to study the development and introduction of alternatives to the private automobile in the Nation's Capital. These alternatives include not only pedestrian malls, but also auto-free or limited zones, proposals relating to the use of bicycles, the use of a variety of pedestrian circulation systems or even new and better uses of conventional transit.

Part of the problem may be that it isn't always easy to know how to use the system we have. We plan to let another grant to find out where and how we can make public transportation more available to those who seek to use it, simply by giving them better information as to where and how such facilities exist. In London it is easier for people to use public transportation than anywhere else in the world -- and a large percentage of them do, perhaps because information as to where and how to use the system is readily available.

We plan to find ways to make it just as easy for the resident of Washington, D. C. to take advantage of existing and improved public transportation in the years to come.

I would also like to see the long-dormant plans to utilize the little-used or abandoned railroad lines in this area be revived and implemented.

Railroads still remain one of our most under-used assets in handling regional transportation problems. I have directed the Federal Railroad Administration to explore this matter, and I would hope that the Council of Governments would also look into this under the grant we have given you.

We have also been looking into advanced new railroad technology. One of the most promising areas of new technology is the Tracked Air Cushion Vehicle-- we call it the "TACV" for short. These passenger vehicles will travel at high speeds, and be powered with so-called linear induction motors. These motors are practically noiseless and are pollution-free.

Because of the importance we attach to public transportation in this area, our Department, tomorrow, will take the first action to design and build a TACV demonstration system to develop alternatives to the automobile. The new system will be built on the Access Road to Dulles International Airport.

Our objective is to have this system finished and running in time for the International Transportation Exhibition to be held at Dulles Airport in late May and early June of 1972.

The TACV track will run from the airport proper to a point just west of the Dolly Madison Boulevard, a distance of 13½ miles.

I want to stress that this project is designed as a demonstration to check feasibility and will be funded from existing authorizations.

The Dulles TACV project is a step toward the most advanced transportation systems for the Washington area -- fast, pollution-free, and safe. But, again, I stress that it is up to the various Governments of the Washington area

to perfect a regional transportation plan which can integrate the TACV, the Metro and all other modes of transportation into a coordinated, balanced regional system.

I should like to see a similar regional approach to aviation. Just as ground transportation requires broad cooperation among different jurisdiction we need similar regional understanding to improve the efficiency of our airports. I would like to see some regional authority take over the operation of our two airports and I would hope Friendship Airport in Baltimore might ultimately be included in such a regional approach.

The TACV will serve the airport itself. At the same time there are real commuter needs in the new communities now existing or developing in the vicinity of Reston and Dulles Airport. Accordingly, I have asked my staff to report to me on the feasibility of using the Dulles Access Road for commuter buses. If we find that this is possible we may be able to provide improved access to the city for those who live in the Reston area as well as reverse commuting access for District residents who will be working in or near Reston when the geological survey moves there.

Decisions on highways and freeways will inevitably constitute a major part of our balanced transportation policy.

In the two years since I have assumed the duties of Secretary of Transportation, I have seen a complete change of attitude on the part of people in our metropolitan areas toward the unrestricted building of freeways.

The citizens of our major cities are asking intelligent and important questions about the routes, the designs and purposes of many of our urban freeways. They are looking for ways for these highways to improve rather than degrade their neighborhoods. I have been impressed by the validity of their questions.

But I am also aware of the tremendous contributions highways and freeways have made to the way we live, work and pursue happiness. We Americans have a degree of mobility undreamed of fifty years ago; yes, even 25 years ago. And mobility means opportunity. We can live in the country and work in the city. We can consolidate our schools. And our summer vacation we can spend practically anywhere in the country.

Examine your own daily activities. You will find that they depend on our fine highways. Highways have made the good life possible. And they can fit in harmoniously as part of the urban scene.

One of the most promising areas for introducing combinations of urban and transportation improvements is in Georgetown. We are working with the District Government to bring into being concepts which will re-develop the whole Georgetown waterfront area. This involves analyzing alternatives to the Whitehurst Freeway and the subsequent beautification and development of the waterfront. We could develop commercial, residential and recreation areas near the waterfront and preserve the important historic sites which give Georgetown and the Nation's Capital its special quality. I am most enthusiastic about this program.

I have saved for last the most important of our transportation challenges -- the new Washington Metro Subway System.

Few things have taken so much of my attention as this new Washington subway. President Nixon charged me personally to work with Washington officials to help bring the subway into being.

My staff and I spent many hours working with local and State officials and with members of Congress in 1969. Again, this past year when the Metro was in danger, I was pleased that our Department could lend the Metro \$57 million to prevent work stoppage.

It is clear that the Metro faces both a long-term and an immediate problem. Just as with everything else, the cost of the Subway has increased -- from \$2.5 billion to over \$3 billion. In addition, some \$900 million worth of bonds cannot be sold unless there is some form of guarantee -- or some form of tax to back them up.

All of us dedicated to the cause of the Metro -- the District Government, WMATA, the White House, and we at the Department of Transportation -- are studying the various alternatives. I expect an effective solution can soon be announced.

Until this problem is resolved and the necessary funds are once again moving, I am prepared, at this time, to undertake certain actions which will ease the short-term difficulties of the Transit Authority.

I have taken the necessary action to make available immediately \$68 million of Federal matching funds, already appropriated by the Congress.

Another possibility, dependent upon further evaluation, could consist of additional short-term loans to the Transit Authority from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration.

These are, of course, only interim measures and ultimately the solution of the Metro's financial difficulties must be developed by the local Governments of the Washington Metropolitan Area, by WMATA itself, and by the Congress. We shall certainly assist in this effort.

The important thing is that this subway must continue. It offers us the best solution to our transportation dilemmas. Conversely, the decision not to continue the subway would ultimately entail two very unpleasant prospects:

- A. The almost complete strangulation of the downtown area in never-ending traffic jams or,
- B. severe restrictions on the use of private automobiles in the working or business areas of the city.

These transportation challenges I have been talking about are very, very difficult to resolve. The average traveler or commuter very rightfully pays no attention to political boundaries as he makes his trip to the airport or the office or home. Yet he may cross two or three political jurisdictions and these two or three jurisdictions must work together to make his trip possible.

To resolve our problems, then, all the Governments represented here tonight will have to display an increasingly higher level of cooperation. I believe such cooperation is possible and I shall do what I can to help. As part of my job, I have already communicated with the Congressional delegations involved among our various jurisdictions and also with the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to urge their cooperation in resolving these Washington metropolitan transportation problems. I found them all very responsive. They are as concerned as you and I.

I have great confidence in you elected officials here tonight. I have been told of the wonderful job Washington area Governments did in sponsoring the overwhelmingly successful referenda for the Metro. With a sound beginning like that, I have no doubt about our ultimate victory.

There is an additional dividend in transportation problem-solving. The know-how -- the system -- the technique that is needed to bring about transportation improvement is the best preparation for the resolution of our other regional problems. If we can solve our transportation problems, we will find the going much easier with the rest.

And so, now it's time to go to work.

Thank you for inviting me here. I wanted very much to come. I want you to know that my interest in these matters is more than professional -- Washington is now my hometown, too.

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