DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

28-S-71

EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN AUTOMOTIVE WHOLESALERS ASSOCIATION, COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL, DENVER, COLORADO, WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 1971, 12:45 P.M.

The invitation for me to speak here today included a brief letter with some suggested topics. One of the sentences in that letter caught my eye. Here it is -- and I quote, "We are dedicated to the idea that true environment and highway safety problems can be solved only after the mechanic in the field is made aware of all current problems and solutions -- and after a good system of getting this information into the field has been established."

Gentlemen, I agree. The aftermarket of the automotive industry is probably the largest business in the world. And your membership is closer to the realities of automotive problems than anyone in the world.

I know -- and you know -- that the man who replaces, repairs and polishes the bumper is the man who best knows its strengths. I started out as a plasterer for my father in Boston. I started my first construction business with a $300 loan and a strong back. I know that the men who carry the bricks and mix the mortar are the men who best know the construction industry.

And it is from this heritage of individual initiative that I come to you gentlemen of the automotive industry. I don't know whether or not I represent the best system for getting information to the field, but I do know that I want to make you aware of our current problems and solutions.

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You have probably read the glaring headlines that proclaim an end to the internal combustion engine. I assure you they didn't come from my office.

That does not mean, however, that we can continue to allow the air pollution that comes from the tailpipes of most automobiles. That fact has been proven scientifically, emotionally, and politically. Something must be done. The challenge before us is to determine just what.

And I believe that the answer will be found. For one thing, you fellows have too many resources, too much talent and too much inventive fire-power to allow any other conclusion. I urge you to keep in mind that the public attitude on this matter is far from apathetic. And I'm counting on you and Detroit to recognize the public mood.

The demand for low emission and better noise control is not going to go away. It is going to increase. Just as the demand for transportation capacity is increasing. And the Congress is especially sensitive to the folks back home. We already have the Clean Air Act of 1970 which sets air pollution limits to be reached by 1975. That Act also says that automobile carbon monoxides and hydrocarbons must be reduced by 90 percent from their 1970 levels.

That's a pretty stiff challenge. There are those who say it can't be done. But I urge each of you to take a positive approach on this issue -- to search for ways to meet these requirements.

And while I believe that they can be met -- and will be met -- by the internal combustion engine, I would be less than candid if I did not mention that alternative power sources are being investigated. Various Federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation, are studying the possibilities of steam, electric, "hybrid" and turbine engines.

I prefer to believe, however, that the answer lies on your work benches rather than our our drawing boards. You have all the skills. And I look forward to your solutions.

Let me turn to another area of direct significance to your industry -- auto safety and our vehicle safety standards.

In 1970 automobile accident fatalities dropped by more than 1,100 deaths from the 1969 level of 56,400. This is the first decrease since 1958, and the largest of modern time. There are people everywhere taking credit for it. And I certainly agree that everyone involved in highway safety deserves credit.

As far as the modern vehicle safety standards are concerned, we can't say just how many lives they saved. We can say, however --and these are cold hard facts -- that death by impalement on unyielding steering columns has fallen off to practically nothing.

Death by contact with shattering windshields, or with sharp exterior protrusions, or interior controls, or even by side-impact collisions -- are significantly decreasing.

We can say that the whole range of Federal Safety Standards is beginning to pay off. And the longer we stay with them, the greater the payoff per year.

Let me comment also on the new bumper standard recently passed by my Department which you undoubtedly have read about in the papers. Unlike the standards aimed primarily at saving the passenger, this standard is also aimed at saving the integrity of the motorist's wallet.

I hope you won't see this standard -- and others like it -- as a threat to your business that must be opposed at all costs. It isn't meant to be. We merely feel that it makes good sense to build a car that will withstand the maximum possible damage.

No citizen likes to have a 2 mile-per-hour accident that costs him $150 to repair. And repeat business is small for the garage mechanic or filling station attendant who has to make that charge. Indeed, I solicit your support for this standard as being a significant step forward in automobile safety and construction.

As most of you know, our Department has contracted with three corporate enterprises to design and build an experimental safety vehicle. We are asking that this car be able to protect its occupant in a 50 mile-an-hour head-on collision and a 70 mile-an-hour roll-over.

It will include every safety and air pollution protection system possible. By "putting it all together", so to speak, we can judge some of the best methods of auto safety construction. The prototype ESV, when finally completed and tested, should prove invaluable in determining the feasibility and potential of new auto safety standards.

In closing, I want to mention one other item -- a safety factor involved in more than 50 percent of all highway fatalities: Alcohol. We must get the drunk driver off the road. And now for the first time we have a comprehensive Federal effort in the Alcohol Countermeasures Program.

The drunk driver problem racks up about 25,000 highway deaths every year. Every man in this room probably knows at least one neighbor, or family member, or good friend who shouldn't be allowed behind the wheel because he has an alcohol problem. We know it, we see it, we even share the road with these people.

What we hope to do is demonstrate to one community after another -- with Federal money -- what can be done and how to do it. When the demonstration is over it'll be up to the community or state to carry on. If we're successful, a lot of people in these communities will be involved in a program too good to stop ... and the states will pick up the ball.

I'd like to suggest that the people in the automobile industry -- in your industry -- get involved publicly and wholeheartedly. I don't have to point out the advantages of good public cause for your industry. It seems to me that any effort capable of cutting our highway death rate in half should get more support from the automobile industry than from anyone else. And if you're still looking for reasons to get involved: the only thing that's going to take the "heat" off the automobile -- at least in part -- is getting the problem drinker and his trail of smashed vehicles and loss lives off of our highways.

I've tried to lay it on the line as much as possible about the problems we face. But please keep in mind that we face these problems together.

I could spend days talking about the magnificient automobile and the good it has done this country. And I do talk about it whenever possible. But you're the inside group. You're the people who know the problems we face. You're the people who must develop the solutions. I just want you to know that the Department of Transportation stands ready to help.

By working together we can limit air pollution. We can save lives. We can strengthen the industry. But we must begin today.

Thank you.

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Let me say first that it is indeed an honor to be here. The Commonwealth Club of California has an outstanding reputation -- an international reputation -- as a meaningful forum for discussion of the issues that face civilized society.

When I first took on this job some of the "whiz kids" in our research section were giving me a briefing and casually mentioned that transportation capacity in the United States will be called upon to double in the next twenty years.

I sent them back to check their figures. They came back and said, "Mr. Secretary -- we were wrong. It's more like 18 1/2 years."

So you see, the challenge of keeping this nation on the move is a massive one. Think of it. Twice the transportation capacity.

Now obviously that doesn't mean twice as many cars and trucks, planes and trains. It doesn't mean twice as many miles of pavement, twice as many parking lots.

What it means is that we simply must get more "bang" for our transportation buck. It means we must better utilize the facilities already in place. It means we must check and double check every additional inch of planned new construction.

It means that in our thoroughly-urbanized society where there is no longer a frontier we must take special precautions that transportation "improvements" do not ride roughshod over the other vital aspects of civilized society.

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Mark my words, we know full well that airports can have harmful effects upon the environment. That's the basic reason why we called a halt to construction of a magnificient new-generation International Jetport scheduled for construction in the Florida Everglades.

We know that highways -- while providing the basic backbone of our transportation network -- cannot be allowed to wipe out historic or especially scenic areas. That's why we put the clamp on an expressway through the Vieux Carre in New Orleans and on a freeway in New Hampshire that would have run right under the nose of the legendary "Old Man of the Mountain". Environmental considerations crop up in everything we do -- including airport site selection, emissions from internal combustion engines, control of ocean pollution on our shipping lanes, and even protection for moose who --in wintertime -- like to consider the main line of the Alaska Railroad their own private right-of-way.

How, then, do we provide for this doubling of transportation capacity while coping with the social challenges of what Harvard Business School's Transportation Professor Paul Cherington calls the "transportation counter-revolution"? How do we satisfy the economic and growth needs of an increasingly affluent mobile society while still working -- as we truly must work -- to preserve and enhance the quality of life in this enlightened age?

Let me quote Professor Cherington at greater length. He says, "In the old days, highway planning was a relatively simple matter. A traffic count was made; a 20-year forecast was run out; and a road was cut through in as straight a line as possible. Since the road almost inevitably attracted more traffic, it was presently widened." Dr. Cherington goes on to point out that "so simplistic a process is no longer acceptable. Now there must first be extensive land-use studies, studies of alternative means of transport and alternative routes. The communities must be consulted. When the alignment is finally determined those in the path of the road must be relocated. The road made much safer. It may have to be run in a depressed right-of-way or in a tunnel, with ventilating systems to carry away the fumes." "In short," he concludes, "the process is far more complicated, time consuming and costly. But it is necessary to meet the demands of the transportation counter-revolution."

The creation of the Department of Transportation, and its establishment four years ago, has been one of the first steps taken in this Nation as we work to meet the excalating demands and the associated social constraints.

First of all, we have aimed for higher visibility of the problem. We have driven home the fact that none of the necessities and amenities of life -- urban and rural -- are worth a hoot and a holler in this day and age without the unifying thread of a transportation system. A balanced system, offering alternatives and backups. And it is important to note the difference between what one might call a transportation "network" and the "system" we are striving for. A "network" may have highways here, railroad tracks over here, and airports in between. But the various modes aren't really connected and integrated. A "system", on the other hand, ties the modes together, enables us to utilize the best of each. It provides "interfaces" rather than dead-ends.

There is another aspect to our planning for a National Transportation "System" -- co-ordinated in theory by Government and carried out in actual fact by private enterprise. And that is utilization of advanced technology to solve our mobility problems. Whether it is an economical and workable "people mover" (such as we hope to demonstrate in Morgantown, West Virginia) or a quiet short takeoff-and-landing airplane that can effectively serve close-in airports, there is a vast array of on-the shelf-technology that is available for tapping.

Just this morning I sped across San Francisco Bay on one of the Coast Guard's experimental air cushion boats -- a type of craft that may well have an application in high speed ferry service in cities such as this one, or in Seattle, Miami, New Orleans or New York. Yesterday afternoon I did something a lot of people here in the Bay Area have been waiting to do -- I rode a BART Train over in Oakland. And believe me, that's going to be a transit system that will be the envy of the world. The people of the Bay Area are to be solidly congratulated -- again and again -- for their willingness to pay so much of the cost, making the commitment long before substantial Federal funding for such projects became available.

Day before yesterday, I rode a special new vehicle -- powered by a Linear Induction Motor -- out in the Colorado Desert at our Department's new High Speed Ground Test Site. The Linear Induction Motor -- which produces almost no noise or pollution-- will, we hope, be the motive power for tracked air cushion vehicles that will run along guideways between cities at speeds of up to 300 miles-an-hour. So yes, technology is destined to play a major role in transportation.

It must. Because, getting back to the 20-year forecast, we are always reminded that better transportation efficiency comes from:

(1) Reaching higher speeds with vehicles now in existence,

(2) Getting more people into each of those vehicles, and

(3) Operating all of those vehicles within a more efficient spatial relationship.

To put it another way, we will double our transport capacity only if we can move people and goods at high speeds in large numbers in what the layman would call a "bumper to bumper" configuration. Needless to say, we must do this with full consideration for safety.

Let me give you an example. On Tuesday morning, I dedicated the new control tower at O'Hare Field in Chicago, the world's busiest airport. This tower's facilities include the new Arts-Three Radar System -- one on which the screen not only shown "blips" where the airplanes are, but also flashes -- in print on the screen right next to each blip -- the plane's identification, its altitude, its direction and speed. Armed with this information, the air traffic controllers will be able to better utilize the air space surrounding O'Hare.

They'll know how fast each plane is going, how high it is, and who it is. They'll be able to let those blips come a little closer together and still be providing maximum safety for air travelers. The new Arts-Three System going into O'Hare -- and subsequently into 26 other locations across the Nation -- is just an indication of what we are up to.

As we look to that point two decades down the road (or 18 1/2 years, as I said) we recognize that the immediate future is destined to be a time of great change in the character, composition and complexion of transportation in America.

In proclaiming this as National Transportation Week, President Nixon has said: "We are entering an era in which our national mobility will demand the continued conquest of space and time, yet our national conscience will no longer permit irreparable damage to our land, our environment, or the social fabric of our communities.

"To meet the challenge of the future," the President goes on, "we will need a truly balanced transportation system -- a system that provides our citizens with the ability to choose the most efficient means of transportation at the least possible cost to themselves and to the environment. I ask for the help of all citizens in achieving this goal."

These words from the President give us our marching orders for the future.

He has called for the upgrading of every mode of transportation. More important, he emphasizes a balanced system, assuring adequate, agreeable transportation for all the people under all circumstances.

Yet as desirable as all this might be -- and regardless of how fervently I speak, or you listen -- success in improving transportation will be neither instant nor cheap.

Nevertheless, the major fiscal foundations necessary to a policy of transportation progressiveness are already in place. 1970 was a landmark year in transportation legislation. We went out and got ourselves some tools.

There were four major transportation improvement bills proposed by the President and passed by the Congress that provide for aggressive programs in aviation, public transit, highways and railroads. Each of the measures stresses the importance of long-term planning and the application of resources commensurate with demand. Together they provide the tools and the resources needed to cope with the problems of today, and to meet the transportation needs of the Nation in the years ahead.

I refer to the Airport-Airways Act, the Urban Mass Transportation Act, The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1970, and the Rail Passenger Service Act.

With these tools, we will be able to upgrade our airports and the airway system, we will be able to assist cities and towns with public transportation, we will being the magnificient interstate highway system close to completion -- while coping with the problems of safety and beautification -- and we have rescued rail passenger service from what surely would have been total oblivion.

The Fiscal Year 1972 Department of Transportation budget -- now pending before the Appropriations Committee, carries forward the purposes of the legislation. Understandably, the budget request of $8.4 billion is larger than ever before. But it includes more than ever before. I might note that one not-insignificant item is $600 million for research and development. We fully intend to meet the challenge of the future.

We are committed to nothing short of a drastic overhaul of the modes and means of transportation. We have to be. We intend to change travel habits in the inner city, and between suburb and city. Indeed, Bill Ruckleshaus who heads up the new Environmental Protection Agency, claims we will soon have to forbid private autos from the center city is we continue to increasingly fill city air with poisonous exhausts. We must act.

AMTRAK -- small at the start, and starting with slender resources -- will put rail passenger service back on the track -- if the public responds.

We are clearing the congestion of the airways. We are reconciling transportation's demands with the fixed demands of the environment. And -- most importantly -- travel, especially highway travel -- must become eminently safer.

The overall process in under way. We have our fingers on the technology, we have the basic financial tools, and we have the national resolve necessary.

All of us expect more of our society that did our Grandfathers and their Fathers before them. Our standards of performance are high. Our recognition of our natural world's weaknesses is greater. We can look at both our ambitions and our limitations with a measured glance.

We know the challenge of the future, and we are determined to meet it. We shall need the support of all America.

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