



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE AMERICAN ROAD BUILDERS ASSOCIATION, ROOSEVELT HOTEL, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1972, 10:00 a.m.

When I refer to "balanced transportation" I'm not talking about exactly as many miles of rapid transit as highway; exactly as many airplanes as buses; exactly as many boxcars as semi-trailers. Putting a "balance" in transportation simply means having enough of the right mode in the right place at the right time.

"Balance" means having available alternatives. It means giving people a choice. And in every sense of the word "balance" implies being for something, not against it.

I get just as impatient as you do with people who think that the answer to all our problems is inaction. There are too many people nowadays who think that doing nothing is better than doing something. And perhaps that's because they are too young to remember the days when people did something because they had nothing. We need positive solutions to today's problems -- in roadbuilding as well as in all our efforts -- and as I have told my people at the Department on many occasions, I'm tired of bureaucrats who make dire predictions because they are unable to come up with viable solutions.

I, for one, am glad that we have a President who believes we don't have to go backwards. Who believes that working to make the world better is preferable to stopping it and getting off; who believes that idealism becomes realism only when we decide to grapple with our problems and solve them.

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So to all who would say that we can't build highways and preserve the environment at the same time -- that we can't solve urban transportation problems without putting the private car out to pasture -- or that we can't revitalize public transportation -- President Nixon says we can and we will.

President Nixon also wants to change the way states and communities interface with the Federal government in coping with local surface transportation challenges. The President's goal is to give states and local government the flexibility they need to deal directly with local problems.

That objective is aided in part by the President's Federal Reorganization Program, which would combine the responsibility for urban transportation with other aspects of urban affairs into a Department of Community Development.

As the President said in his State of the Union Message: "If we put more power in more places, we can make government creative in more places."

Creativity entails change. Unless we act as the architects of change, we will surely be its victims.

Ralph Bartelsmeyer -- Deputy Federal Highway Administrator -- reminded me recently of an Italian proverb which suggests that "any plan is bad that is not amenable to change." Our Federal-State Highway Program, therefore, must be a very good plan -- because it has been continually changing, constantly evolving since 1916. What started as a very modest Federal Assistance Program became large enough, and financially strong enough to produce the most magnificent system of highways the world has ever known. Now the winds of change are blowing again, and the weather-vane of public necessity is pointing our highway program in new directions.

As Ralph Bartelsmeyer told the Earthmoving Industry Conference earlier this month, he has been associated with the Nation's highway programs for nearly 40 years; he has been State Highway Commissioner in Illinois and a President of American Association of State Highway Officials. If he can accept changes in the course of the Federal Highway Program, anyone can.

It was especially gratifying, too, to hear my good friend Grant Mickle, President of the Highway Users Federation, endorse the concept of Highway Trust Fund resources to assist the development of public transportation in urban areas. Grant said, and I quote: "We believe the encouragement of bus mass transportation is important to the overall solution of the urban transportation problem and would benefit both truck and private car operators, and certainly contribute to the public interest."

Those objectives would be served by Congressional approval of the Urban Transportation Program proposal President Nixon and I announced last month. (The enabling legislation went up to the Hill this past Friday.)



Let me explain that proposal to you. I consider it to be the most important proposal I have made since becoming Secretary of Transportation.

We propose to make money available from the Highway Trust Fund for de-congesting urban arteries by offering cities and states the opportunity to make a choice. Local and state officials would be given the option of financing urban highways or urban mass transit from a single fund as they see fit, and in the proportions they consider most efficient. Thus, for the first time, urban areas will themselves have the flexibility necessary to free the congested arteries of this Nation.

While the money will come from Washington, as in the past, the initiative for solving urban transportation problems will be placed where it belongs -- with the leaders of those areas who are most familiar with the problems.

Of the \$5.6 billion collected through user taxes and placed in the Highway Trust Fund in Fiscal Year 1974, \$1 billion would go into the Urban Transportation Program for surface transportation improvements. That figure would rise to \$1.85 billion, in Fiscal 1975, and \$2.25 billion in Fiscal 1976.

And I want to point out that this is not just a big city program, or a mass transit program, or a rapid rail program. It is a Transportation program, and that's a distinction worth making.

It does not alter in any way our commitment to finishing the Interstate Highway System. And in fact, it strengthens our commitment to build and improve highways not on the Interstate System by establishing a new rural Federal-aid system and a Rural General Transportation Fund.

The funding levels for these new proposals would insure a higher quality rural road system than presently exists. And for the first time, Federal funds could be used to help build county roads and bridges -- so vital to mobility in rural communities. Our recommendation is that the new Rural General Transportation Fund start off at \$200 million annually beginning in FY 1974, and increase to \$400 million annually for FY 1976 through 1979, for transportation capital expenditures in rural areas.

This, of course, is in addition to \$800 million annually for the regular, rural aid system. Priorities under the new Rural Federal Aid System would be established locally, to give rural people the same flexibility that is being made available to urban areas.

This program recognizes the diverse transportation needs of this Nation.

It recognizes the very pressing need for alternatives. Let me give you an example I am well aware of -- the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Back in the old days it often took four to five hours to drive a car or



a truck from the New York State line to Boston -- the length of the State. Now -- with new and modern highways -- the trip time is cut in half. Until you get within 10 miles of Boston. It takes an hour to go those last 10 miles during peak periods -- because there are just too many vehicles. If a good alternative were available to commuters, the urban expressway would move at a speed-limit pace 24 hours a day. We would be getting the efficiency we were looking for when the highway was first designed and built.

The fact is, we are not getting full value from our investment in the Nation's highways if we gain time on part of the system only to lose it on another. That is why the development of private and public transportation must now be joined, and mature together. The modes must be compatible, not competitive. They afford the traveler a choice rather than an ultimatum. As a means of lessening highway congestion, we are convinced that assisting the development of better public transit is a good investment for the highway user's money.

I am confident you believe it, too. The theme of this convention -- "Total Transportation" -- says so. Commuters caught twice a day in fume-choked bumper-to-bumper traffic long for the return of the open road.

It is curious that Americans go to Europe or to Japan and return talking about other countries' public transportation systems, while foreigners come to our shores and go home envying our highway system.

When you think about it, we are in an enviable position. We have superb highways and the means to build more where needed. We also are awake to the danger of having our urban circulatory systems strangled by traffic and choked by smog, rendering even our great highways useless, unless we enable public transportation to carry its fair share of the load.

President Nixon said it all. "Highway building has been our greatest success story. Now we must write a similar success story for mass transportation in the 1970's."

My friends, what the President envisions is not impossible. But it is a great undertaking. It is a singularly difficult task that can be performed only by the same plurality of public and private interests that took common, everyday roadbuilding -- and produced a masterpiece of mobility.

The members of the American Road Builders Association will certainly go down in history as men of vision and accomplishment. You have been solid contributors to the strength and wealth of the Nation. The late Thomas McDonald, when he was Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Roads, made a very cogent observation. "We were not a wealthy Nation when we began improving our highways", he said. "But the roads themselves helped us create new wealth -- in business and industry and land values. So it was not our wealth that made our highways possible; rather, it was our highways that contributed to our wealth."

You, the creators of that wealth and progress -- have the opportunity now to create new wealth, new efficiency, and a new balance to the great challenge of transportation.

It used to be, perhaps, that the expressions "road builder" and "transportation builder" were synonymous. But that day has changed. You now have the opportunity to broaden your horizons -- to take on the new task of being transportation builders for all the Nation -- and build a better world for today and for the generations that will follow.

Knowing you as I do, I am sure you will give full consideration to the great challenge that lies before us, and will live up to that challenge.

Thank you.

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