



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

99-S-72

STATEMENT BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, PRESS
CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, D.C., DECEMBER 19, 1972

Good morning. You have our press release, I believe, outlining some of the Department's major accomplishments during 1972. I want to comment on those I feel are most significant, touch on the legislative and administrative goals in view for 1973, and then answer your questions.

Let me say, first, that it has been a good year...a constructive year for transportation progress.

We did not see an end to air piracy but certainly we have moved several steps closer to our objectives -- first, of denying hijackers access to commercial aircraft, and -- second -- giving them no place to go in the increasingly unlikely event that they would circumvent our prevention techniques.

-- On the fifth of this month, I directed that local law enforcement officers be stationed at every boarding gate; that all passengers be screened; and that all carry-on baggage be inspected.

-- Earlier in the year we strongly advocated ICAO enforcement of sanctions against any country harboring air pirates; and

-- Negotiations now underway with Cuba show real promise for removing that country from the diminishing list of sanctuaries for air pirates.

During 1972 we further extended President Nixon's program of assistance for public transportation.

-- More than \$2 billion in Federal mass transit funds have been expended or committed since early 1969, including allocation of \$308 million from July 1 through November 30, 1972.

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-- This was the year the first new subway system to be built in the United States (the Bay Area Rapid Transit System) began operations. Federal support for this program now totals \$244 million, including the grant last September of \$38 million -- our second largest of calendar 1972.

-- This was also the year we saw rather convincing proof of the effect exclusive busways can have on the travel habits of suburban commuters. Surveys show that bus ridership on the Shirley Highway express lanes is up 230 percent, with some 30,000 commuters now using the bus instead of cars.

In civil aviation progress, all 20 of our contiguous air route traffic control centers are now using the automated flight data processing system. Thirty-four of the automated radar terminal (ARTS III) systems are operational, and 53 instrument landing systems were installed during the year.

The Department obligated more than \$2 billion for the Interstate Highway System in 1972 (now 80 percent complete), and \$698 million for primary and secondary roads. Even more important, perhaps, we allocated \$495 million for highway safety improvements.

We worked very hard this year to make funds from the Highway Trust Fund available for urban transportation projects, including public transit if communities so desire. I confess I leave my post as Secretary with some sense of disappointment that the Administration's position on this important issue did not prevail in the last Congress. But I am confident that my successor will persevere in this cause, and that a proposed amendment to the Federal Highway Act will be foremost on our legislative agenda when the 93rd Congress convenes. As I have pointed out before, the language of the 1956 Highway Act specifically states that the trust fund will be "for the benefit of the user" -- and I can think of no better way to get more mileage out of every highway dollar than to relieve the congestion on our urban roadways.

Looking briefly at other legislative objectives for 1973, the Department plans to renew efforts to secure regulatory modernization for the rail segment of our surface transportation industry. The railroads also desperately need assistance for the purposes of upgrading their right-of-way, acquiring new equipment, and computerizing freight car management -- and these needs grow more urgent by the hour.

Among some 40 other legislative proposals being considered by the Department are:

-- implementation of our Northeast Corridor Study to make travel easier and faster;

- disposition of the Federally-owned airports and the Alaska Railroad;
- extension of obligation authority under the Airport Development Aid program; and
- regulatory authority for the enforcement of cargo security.

The Department will also seek additional safety legislation next year, as well as present model legislation for vehicle repair and no-fault insurance programs to the states.

Safety is still the Department of Transportation's first order of business. I have been gratified by the progress of our Experimental Safety Vehicle (ESV) program -- I have, in fact, just come from our plaza downstairs where we accepted the Ford ESV, the fourth entry in our ESV series. Sweden joined the ranks of the ESV nations this year, and every country manufacturing cars marketed in the United States is now represented.

I am disappointed, however, that despite strong efforts on our part, the highway death toll for the first 10 months of 1972 is running ahead of last year, and our "winning streak" of two consecutive years of fewer highway deaths may be broken.

Bearing in mind that the odds run heavily against us -- a three percent increase in drivers, a 3.9 percent increase in vehicle registrations and a 5.4 percent growth in vehicle miles traveled -- we will have to take sterner measures to offset this increased exposure to risk and begin to scale down the highway death toll.

We added 26 Alcohol Safety Action Projects last year to the nine already operational, and the preliminary data from the communities where these projects have been in force show rather conclusively that when you get drunk drivers off the road, the number of fatalities go down. So you can expect the Department to continue that program, and to pursue all avenues to greater transportation safety.

In my view, the last four years have been constructive ones for transportation and for the environment as well as other factors affecting our quality of life. In prior years progress tended to be focused on one mode at a time while other modes fell behind, with unfortunate consequences for our total mobility, sometimes to the detriment of our environment and life style. Under President Nixon's leadership, and with real bi-partisan support in Congress, great strides have been taken

toward the achievement of real balance and environmental parity in our transportation system. We have come to the aid of public transit, our airports and airways, passenger rail service, and America's maritime interests. We have generated new sources of transportation revenues, encouraged better regional and community planning, put new emphasis on safety and environmental responsibility, moved to halt cargo theft, and promoted better service for the transportation consumer -- particularly the elderly and the handicapped.

There is every indication that Mr. Brinegar will support and amplify these transportation policies. I am just as confident he will introduce new initiatives and bring added vigor to the challenges of making transportation better for all our citizens.

Now -- your questions, if you please.

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