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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE 1972 TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS, CRYSTAL BALLROOM, MARC PLAZA, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, MONDAY, JULY 17, 1972

I am truly honored and delighted to have this opportunity to be with you today for the opening of the Society's Transportation Conference. A.S.C.E. is to be complimented for organizing this forum, and for enlisting such an outstanding array of support organizations -- co-sponsors representing virtually every mode of transportation.

I always feel a great rapport with civil engineers, having served my hitch with the Seabees in World War II, and being a past president of the Society of American Military Engineers.

And of course in my public positions over the last two decades I have dealt continually with men (and women too, of course) who are dedicating their talents and abilities to the design, construction and management of our great engineering advances.

We all learned in high school physics that Archimedes claimed he could move the world if he had a lever long enough.

We are extremely close to having that lever in our hands today -- and now, more so than ever before -- what we do with our leverage as we build for the future is of vital importance. This is especially true in transportation, and I welcome this chance to share some thoughts with you today.

As you are all well aware, there are several conflicting viewpoints on the role of technological improvement in transportation. There are those who very simplistically say "we can build it, so we must build it." On the other hand, there are those who would call a dead-halt to all further sophistication and indeed -- would even have us return to some point in the past when life was allegedly a bit simpler and less involved.

As is generally the case in something like this, the answer -- to me at least -- lies somewhere in the middle.

I, for one, don't want to go back to those days just 150 years ago when the work week was 72 hours, average pay was \$275 a year, a distance of 20 miles comprised a weekend trip, and male-life expectancy was about 38 years.

By the same token, I don't look forward to a world in which the air is polluted with death-dealing gases, the land is bombarded with radioactivity, and the water is saturated with uncontrolled wastes.

You don't want those extremes either, do you? Of course not!

In over-reacting to what technology is capable of doing, too many people tend to put a clamp on what technology should be doing.

So, in addressing myself to the advertised topic here today -- "our emerging National Transportation Policy" -- let me begin with a brief statement outlining our basic transportation concept within the Department.

To this Administration, transportation means "mobility." And mobility requires that we develop and improve all modes so each will be able to best serve the purpose for which it was designed -- economically, efficiently, and safely. Our ultimate objective, of course, is to create a truly balanced transportation system.

This can only be achieved, however, if we develop all of our systems on a truly intermodal basis, and by putting the most emphasis in areas where the greatest need exists.

For Fiscal Year 1973 -- which started the first of this month -- we are aiming at four major program thrusts as we address ourselves to the basic needs. (I might note that these are parallel thrusts, and just because I list them 1-2-3-4 doesn't mean that any one takes greater precedence than the others.)

First, we recognize a crying need for expanded research and development activity in transportation. Back in 1968 the Department spent about \$150 million on transportation research.

By 1972 we had that figure up to \$300 million, and in Fiscal '73 it is 450 million. We want better capability for the future, because we know as well as anyone that today's answers won't meet tomorrow's needs. For instance we know that the demand for transportation capacity will have doubled by 1990, but we also know that a simple doubling of the number of cars, trucks, buses, trains, ships, planes, highways and airports would make our problems increase geometrically. New systems -- and new interfaces between the modes -- are needed now as we look to the years ahead.

Second, we must continually provide for increased safety in transportation -- in all of the modes. The critical matter at the moment is highway safety, with some 50,000 deaths a year (150 a day), but the potential for disaster exists throughout transportation, and safety measures and standards must continually be established and upgraded.

Third, all of us recognize as no generation has before, that we must pay full and close attention to the environmental impact of all that we plan and build. I know that those of you in highway construction especially have your own occasional thoughts about the National Environmental Protection Act, and the required Environmental Impact Statements. But I am also aware of the long-standing determination of responsible builders that we leave the land better than it was when we found it. Frustrations among those who are settled in the status quo are justifiable when the long-range goal is so obviously worthwhile. Of course environmental quality costs more -- but it's worth more, too, and this is and will be a quality Nation!

The fourth major thrust for Fiscal 73 -- and here we get a little more specific because the need is so readily evident -- lies in revitalizing our urban transportation facilities.

This is imperative if we are to maintain livable cities, and we are aiming to accomplish this revitalization with a substantial concentration of major resources. (Perhaps you could call them our A-B-C-D resources -- ability, brains, cash, and determination.)

The object is two-fold.

First, we want to get at least some commuters -- who hit the city streets only twice a day -- out of their cars and back into public transportation. In the 20 years from 1950 to 1970 public transportation lost more than 7 billion annual riders and the fleet was depleted by 25,000 vehicles. They were sacrificed to that private transit system, the family car, and as a result most of our cities find themselves dangerously near their own sacrificial altar. Now it is necessary to lure many of those riders back to public transportation that is convenient, competitive and attractive. In some of our larger cities this may mean fixed right-of-way rapid transit, but in the vast majority of urban centers it means better buses on better schedules making better utilization of rights-of-way already in place.

The second objective is to realize that any mass transit system is considerably more than a shuttle for shoppers and commuters. It is a vital community service for those who cannot or do not drive. This includes the young and the old, the handicapped, the infirm and the economically disadvantaged. These are the people who now exist without mobility in cities glutted with it. Certainly, this is the result of an imbalanced system, and it must be corrected.

Two years ago, President Nixon foresaw this situation. He said then: "Highway building has been our greatest success story in the past two decades... now we must write a similar success story for mass transportation in the 1970's."

The world is well aware of the tremendous engineering job that was done in creating our magnificent Interstate and Federal Aid Highway System. This Nation's ability to travel between cities is a phenomenon that is envied through the world.

Now let's apply the same know how -- the same ability, brains and dedication -- to freeing the congestion within our cities!

Let's determine that this is a top-priority matter, and let's work together to make our cities work! That's what this Administration wants to do, and we want your help in doing it. To implement this thinking, the President proposed and Congress passed the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970. We feel this philosophy is working. Surely, the cultivation of improved mass transit offers one of the cheaper solutions to big city problems, including pollution and congestion. To achieve these ends, the Act called for raising the level of urban transportation assistance from \$130 million in 1968 to \$600 million in 1972 and \$1 billion for FY 1973. This will not only allow large metropolitan areas to plan and put into effect new systems and to improve existing systems, it will also make possible major advances towards a truly balanced National Transportation System.

Our most recent effort to attain this balance is our proposal to make a portion of the Highway Trust Fund available to finance urban transportation projects on a local-option basis. Our proposal would create a single category of funding for capital investment for any needed public, surface transportation facility. Under this bill, local elected officials will be able to choose the kind of urban transportation investments which will give them the most for their money. Thus, decision making will be taken out of Washington and put in the hands of knowledgeable local officials, where it belongs.

The key words are "choose the kind of urban transportation investments which will give them the most for their money."

Now I am sure that a number of you have heard of this proposal as a "raid on the Trust Fund," or a "diversion of highway money," or some such phrasing. That simply isn't true.

If the states and the metropolitan areas want to use every last penny of this new category of funding for highway construction, they are free to go right ahead and do just that! The difference is simply that they no longer would have to use every last penny for highways. They would be using that money for transportation, pure and simple, and the priorities would be established at the local level by those who know the problems best.

There are those, too, who claim that allowing a portion of this money to be used for purposes other than the design and construction of highways "breaks faith" with those who have been paying the highway user taxes. Not so. To my way of thinking, the average American who puts money into the Trust Fund through fuel and accessory taxes isn't categorically after the construction of more miles of pavement. He's after better transportation. There isn't a motorist or trucker or bus company in the country who wants to build new highways only to find them filled with crawling bumper-to-bumper traffic twice a day. Why build 60-mile-an-hour freeways when traffic creeps along at a snails pace?

What we want to do with the Urban Fund is provide commuters with an alternative -- to get them into buses and transit systems so as to reduce congestion -- and open up our highway system for those who do have a legitimate reason for traveling by motor vehicle.

And this is the sort of efficiency we are looking for in all modes.

I look to the kind of engineering improvements that will reshape clanging commuter trains into quiet automated rapid rail systems; an aviation system that will move people through the terminal as efficiently as it does through the skies; buses that are clean and comfortable; Automobiles and highways that exist harmoniously with the environment; and hundreds of other functional improvements necessary to upgrading the quality of life.

To deny further advances in technology is to deny all future goals.

Today's transportation engineer must -- more than ever before -- shape his work to meet the needs of the human environment. Not only must he be a technical scientist, but something of a sociologist and psychologist as well. And he must continue to keep in mind at all times that community interaction and community welfare are the reasons for his existence.

This means that the engineer and the city planner must, for example, continue to find new ways to integrate our transportation systems -- to mold them into one efficient and coordinated means of mobility. At the Department of Transportation we are just beginning a research and demonstration program of deliberate intermodal integration.

We are proposing a sequence of studies and projects aimed at the selection, by 1974, of a city or cities where the components of intermodal integration can be demonstrated. In defining these components as institutional, operational and physical, we find that the institutional problems are the first -- and perhaps the most difficult -- to overcome. We must first decide how we want to live -- and then decide what kind of city, what physical characteristics will yield that kind of life.

A recent report to the Department of Transportation by the National Academy of Engineering underscores this point. The Academy's Committee on Transportation reported, "Technology makes possible a wide range of choices, but the present choices need to be made in relation to urban goals." That challenge presents engineers, planners, and government leaders alike with a most difficult task. Call it evaluation. Call it technological assessment. But it all adds up to the same thing: Transportation must serve the larger goals of society, as well as the more narrow needs for individual mobility. In my judgement, to resist this principle is to deny the political and industrial realities of the last decade.

This Administration sees transportation planning as essential for long-term management and preservation of our national heritage. We know that cities must move and breathe before they can work or play. We know democracy must solve problems before it can be respected. We know the human race simply cannot survive or prosper in a poisoned environment.

We are convinced this country can set an example for the world if only it will stick with its principles. We have much to be proud of -- and more virtues than faults.

And -- my friends -- we know that we live in the greatest Nation in the world. There are those who knock this country. There are those who would spend far more time talking about what is wrong with America than taking a look at what is right with America.

To the gadflies, the nay-sayers of society, I would say only this: There are far more people trying to get into this country than there are trying to leave it.

The applications for immigration are piled sky-high, because the people of the world know that despite our faults we have set the pace for freedom, liberty, and justice for all. And because of this, we can have faith in our future. We have arrived at this point in history -- in large part -- because we have been a Nation of builders. We will continue to build. We will build for a better day.

And I respect those builders -- I respect you ladies and gentlemen -- who have brought us such a long way in such a short time. I have often remarked that mankind had thousands of years to adjust from the invention of the wheel to the first automobile. But we have had barely half-a-century to go from the Model-T to jet aircraft carrying 400 people. Our times move fast. Our knowledge and skills are abundant. Our material resources haven't failed us yet. Our needs are great.

Yet -- as you all know so well -- we must resolve to apply our technological genius to meet human needs.

With your continuing help and concern, we can be the first Nation to truly master the vital challenges of urban society.