



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS <sup>30)</sup>

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYERS NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C., MONDAY, MAY 15, 1972

I am privileged to bring you the greetings of President Nixon. I mentioned to him that I would be meeting with you and he asked me to give you his best wishes for a worthwhile and productive conference. As you know, the well being and prosperity of the construction industry has been one of his chief concerns. He knows that in your continued growth lies a major key to a more prosperous America. Certainly, our own forecasts for the growth of transportation fully bear out the President's optimism. Our studies show that the transportation industry in this Country must double its capacity in the next 18 years.

At first, growth of this magnitude doesn't seem unusual -- especially in this age of miracles. But let me put it another way: We must, between now and 1990, create as much new transport capacity as has been built since the founding of this Nation.

And in my Department we are working to help transportation grow and expand. By July 1 of this year, we shall have allocated in 18 months, 1 billion dollars to our cities to help them improve and modernize their urban transit systems. That's equal to what had been spent in all of the previous 5 years put together.

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U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION EXPOSITION  
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT \* MAY 27-JUNE 4, 1972

We are also moving ahead on our highway system. Thanks to the industry and productivity of the construction firms represented here today we have made steady progress on completing the interstate system. Less than 23 percent of the system remains to be opened.

The same is true in aviation. Under the landmark airport and airways assistance law signed by President Nixon, we shall have allocated by the end of next month more than a quarter of a billion dollars to help improve and modernize America's airports. We shall also have allocated nearly 350 million dollars more to improve and modernize our airway system.

I would caution against the assumption however, that we intend to double capacity solely by doubling the number of cars, trucks, airplanes, airports or highways. We intend rather to meet our total goals by the added technique of making better use of existing facilities -- by improved efficiencies of operations -- by getting more "bang" for the taxpayers' buck.

And our major challenge right now is providing improved mobility -- for people and goods -- in and around our urban areas.

A few weeks ago we sent up to Capitol Hill what I consider the most important single piece of transportation legislation I have ever proposed. This bill would set up a special program that would allocate Federal-aid money to city and town officials to be spent as they see fit in the resolution of their local surface transportation needs. The key words are -- as they see fit.

The solutions to urban transportation problems are many and varied. In one city, it may be new exclusive lanes for buses; it may be construction or enlargement of a fixed rapid rail system; it may mean the purchase of a new and up-to-date buses -- or a combination of these. It may well mean additional urban highways. Whatever the answer, the local officials back in their own home cities and towns best know the problems and they best know the answers. And whatever direction they take, it should be determined by themselves. It should not be dictated by Washington.

We proposed to start this program at \$1 billion in fiscal year 1974 -- or beginning July 1 of next year.

At the same time, we are proposing another rural general transportation program which would provide state, county and local officials with Federal funds to build or maintain country roads and bridges. The purpose, again, is to encourage local decision making.

We are proposing, finally, that the money for these programs be taken from the Highway Trust Fund.

Now I realize that many of you here today were surprised when you first heard about our proposal. Many of you were asking, "is this the John Volpe of the Volpe Construction Company? Is this the former president of the Associated General Contractors? President Eisenhower's first Federal Highway Administrator?" The answer is yes! It's the same John Volpe -- but John Volpe sits in quite a different chair these days.

I tell you, gentlemen, if any one of you here today were to spend two days in my office -- two days reading my mail, two days attending the meetings I do, meeting with the visitors to my office -- or traveling with me; two days of this and you would be confirmed believers in this new proposal.

I appeal to you for support because I know the kind of people you are. I know that if anyone of you here today were to be convinced that a certain action would help our Country, you would go to bat for it. I tell you now our people need this help. The alternative is the continued worsening of our urban crisis.

I also point out that you leaders of the construction industry are among the ultimate beneficiaries. At the end of the transportation line stand the buildings you put up -- or the highways, bridges, canals and the hundreds of other improvements you construct. That's where the materials stop. Just as you are the beneficiaries of an efficient transportation system, you also have been paying the penalty of a congested network slowly being paralyzed by too many vehicles operating in too few facilities. How do you get your materials to your job? What are traffic delays doing to you? Do you have idle crews waiting for delayed materials or equipment? In sum, what are your transportation costs today? Total them up and then consider our rate of vehicle growth. Everytime the Census Bureau shows a gain of one person, we add two more vehicles to our highways. Every day of the year, 10,000 new drivers secure licenses. Every day of the year, we add a net total of 10,000 new automobiles to our highways. Every day of the year. Think about it for a while. This kind of growth can only lead to an eventual stoppage.

Each of you here today also has another type of very personal stake -- a very vital stake -- in the success of our legislation. It is concerned with the air you breathe -- the very breath of life. There's no question in my mind -- or in my lungs every now and then -- that emissions from the internal combustion engine provide a very sizeable portion of our air pollution problem and pose a very serious threat to our national health and well-being.

No responsible person can argue with this logic.

Our new proposal does not mean the abandonment of the Interstate Highway System or a moratorium on highway construction. The building of the interstate highway will continue and the system will be completed. It is also very likely -- as I noted -- that portions of our new urban program will be used to construct or improve urban highway corridors. The essence of our

plan is to do away with the dictate that transportation expansion may only come in the form of highways. We are substituting instead flexibility of decisions at the local level.

There is a similar urgency in the challenge of our railroads. And let me stress right here the importance of our railroad system. But we have no real alternative for our railroad system. Put all the locomotives in the yards at 12 noon and by one o'clock the whole economy will start to slow down. Every American has a vital personal stake in the strength and vigor of our railroad system. Each of us must share concern for the shaky financial structure of our railroads.

The facts on the profitability of American railroads speak for themselves. Between 1950 and 1970, the operating revenues of America's railroads increased 26 percent. During this same period -- and in the face of these increased revenues -- the railroads' consolidated net income fell off 86 percent.

President Nixon has sent to the Congress two bills that would turn the railroads around and point them toward efficient profitability. The first would reform the economic regulatory laws that control the railroads. As they stand now, these laws -- the result of 84 years of somewhat "patchwork" legislation -- are inefficient and inequitable.

As Fortune Magazine put it so aptly, "Federal regulation of transportation is a failure -- a creaky anachronism no more suited to a modern America than an oxcart on an expressway". We want these laws corrected and modernized.

Our second bill is designed to provide immediate relief. It would set up a revolving fund to insure railroad equipment debts. It would also assist the railroads in making more efficient use of their rolling stock and it would set a limit on property taxes established by local authorities on railroads.

The railroads must be returned to profitability. There is no acceptable alternative.

We are not in our mission, however, relying only on legislation and financial grants. Transportation expansion also depends on innovation, new efficiency, technological advance --in a word, research and development. And here, too, we are moving forward.

Our research and development budget amounts to nearly half a billion dollars.

Our program includes new vehicles, systems, operations and studies. We have developed safety autos that can withstand head-on collisions at 50 miles per hour. We are investigating new ways of keeping the St. Lawrence Seaway open 12 months of the year. We are developing dial-a-ride bus systems; transportation for the handicapped; high speed tracked air cushion vehicles with linear induction motors and hundreds of other innovations.

We are moving ahead. We shall be demonstrating many of these new techniques at our great transportation trade fair -- Transpo 72 -- to be held at Dulles International Airport, opening a week from Saturday, May 27. This will be the biggest and best transportation show ever. I urge all of you who can to come down and see. There will be something for the whole family.

But our research and development efforts look beyond creating the new, the faster, the better. We are determined that the cause of protecting the environment shall have a top priority.

And I could not talk to construction men without at least mentioning something you are always well aware of -- the matter of safety. Some of you older fellows may remember a speech I gave at an Associated General Construction Convention some years ago entitled "100 Ways to Save a Buck". It had as its thesis the fact that industrial safety not only saves lives, but saves money too.

Well, the same holds true in transportation. Just last Thursday our National Transportation Safety Board released the total transportation accident figure for 1971 -- and it came to a shocking 59,215 people killed.

Check your watch. At this same time tomorrow -- over 160 will be killed in transportation accidents.

The sad fact is -- about 150 of them will be killed in highway crashes. This is an area of great concern to me, and we are determined to lick this problem. We must cut highway fatalities -- and we will, through safer roads, better vehicles, and with better drivers.

Gentlemen, I could go on with the story of transportation, but time is getting short and I want to comment just briefly on another matter of immediate importance to us all.

One week ago tonight President Nixon spoke to the Nation regarding developments in Southeast Asia. He announced his program for cutting off the enemy supply lines so the unconscionable attack by the North Vietnamese would wither and halt. He has moved to end the war in Vietnam, and I support that move wholeheartedly. It deserves your full support -- and the support of every patriotic American -- as well. I say this not as a Republican, but as an American. I say this not as a Government official, but as a citizen.

The President has said: "There is only one way to stop the killing. That is to keep the weapons of war out of the hands of the international outlaws of North Vietnam."

We all know that no army can long survive without an adequate line of supply. We also know that the vast majority of supplies supporting the North Vietnamese invasion forces (12 of their 13 divisions) are provided by outside powers. The President's action that denies North Vietnam the

weapons and supplies of attack is bold strategy -- effective strategy. The interdiction of supply lines has not been an aggressive act of war, it is a preventive act. It is designed to prevent the violent imposition of communism on the 17 million people of South Vietnam. It is designed to protect the 60,000 Americans still in Vietnam. It is designed to bring an end to this war.

The President's terms for peace are fair and just. When the prisoners of war's are released, and when there is an internationally-supervised cease-fire throughout Indochina, imports will flow again and all American troops will be withdrawn within four months.

Yet in the face of this reasonable and determined effort for peace, partisan motives have brought out an extremely dangerous response from people in influential positions right here at home. At a time when this Nation needs calm unity of purpose, these people have weighed in one after another with destructive criticism of the most irresponsible sort. This reaction must be viewed with grim satisfaction by the enemies of freedom.

If we cut and run -- if we capitulate -- if we abandon our pledges and our honor; if we stand paralyzed by partisanship at this moment of truth, on whose hands will the blood be then?

President Nixon has not widened this war. He has moved to end the war.

This is a defense of free people, a defense of the honor of this Nation, and a defense of the lives of our men who are there.

The President needs the full support of every responsible American.

I am confident that the construction industry -- made up of men who are responsible, dedicated, and concerned -- will continue to give that full support to the Commander in Chief.

Again, my thanks for inviting me to be with you today. I wish I could spend more time with you; I'm sure you know that deep in my heart my first love is the industry in which we have all grown up together.

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