



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

87-S-72

REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, AT A LUNCHEON SPONSORED BY THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT (RTD), DENVER, COLORADO, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1972, DENVER INN, DENVER, COLORADO, 1:00 p.m. MDT

We are here today to announce the Department of Transportation's decision to go ahead with a 100-percent Federally funded demonstration project of an entirely new technology -- a new rapid transit system -- here in the city of Denver. Our initial Federal investment will be on the order of \$11 million.

Denver won out following initial expressions of interest from 30 urban areas -- a field that was later narrowed down to five detailed proposals. We have good reasons for choosing Denver, and I'll go into detail in a moment.

I said that it would be an "entirely new" transit system here, and I meant exactly that.

Yesterday I was in the San Francisco-Oakland area for the dedication of the great new rapid transit system there, the BART system. It is truly magnificent, and the people throughout the Bay Area take tremendous pride in not only having it -- but they like to "rub it in" a little bit by pointing out that it is the first entirely new system built anywhere in the country in over half a century.

I think that's a great attitude, really. I encourage community pride in balanced transportation wherever I go. But they'd better talk fast out in San Francisco, because as of today Denver, Colorado, is on the way with a new breakthrough in urban mobility that will attract attention and admiration from around the world.

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The system that we will start here in Denver is identified by its initials: "PRT." That stands for Personal Rapid Transit.

Perhaps some of you were at Transpo 72, our international transportation exposition at Dulles Airport near Washington last May. We had four PRT's in operation there -- and in many respects they were the hit of the show.

The system in downtown Denver will be the first application of PRT technology to a thriving, always-busy, downtown urban area. Our demonstration project here will test the technology to the maximum -- and I can tell you very frankly, we wouldn't be putting the taxpayers' money on the line if we didn't think it will pass that test with high marks.

Let me try to describe in one or two sentences the uniqueness of the PRT concept. Perhaps you could call it a "horizontal elevator." When you enter the PRT station you push a button -- the same way you summon an elevator. When the small, personalized passenger cab arrives (they are usually designed to accommodate about a dozen people), you enter and push another button indicating your destination. And off you go!

If there are other passengers waiting at stations along the line, the vehicle stops to pick them up. If other riders want to get off prior to reaching your station, it does that. If you are the only passenger on the system at that particular moment, you ride non-stop.

I might note that the technology of laying an elevator system down on its side wasn't that tricky. The hard part was creating an efficient demand-response control system; but intensive research, both within DOT and among a sizable number of private industries (mostly aerospace firms) has made the system feasible and workable. All that remains is to install such a system in a busy downtown area -- turn on the power -- and watch it work. And that's exactly what we intend to do here in Denver.

Now, why Denver?

First of all, we found strong local support here for such a demonstration project. Our reading is that Denver is eager to be a pace-setter, eager to work hard to make the system work.

Second, the site is eminently suitable; a dense, clearly-defined urban core where a PRT system can fill an obvious need.

Third, the site is suitable for potential expansion.

Fourth, the local co-ordinating organization (in this case, the RTD) has a strong capability for planning, implementation and operations after the Federal role diminishes or ceases. I might note parenthetically here that the Federal Government does not operate demonstration projects ad-infinitum. If they work out -- and are useful additions to the community -- we turn them over to local authorities.



The fifth point ties in with what I just mentioned. We selected Denver because RTD has the capability, the potential capability, of providing fiscal support for completion of the project under the Capital Grant program.

So now let's get to the hard details.

We propose to construct one-mile of double guideway with three stations and five vehicles. We will invite proposals from manufacturers in about a month's time. Design, engineering and construction should take about 30 months -- which brings us to initial operational capability in the spring of 1975.

During that time -- and here is a key point -- we expect that RTD will be moving full speed ahead with procedures to implement financing of phase two of the system. Phase two calls for an additional four miles of double guideway, 12 more stations, and 195 more vehicles. If RTD raises the 1/3 local share of the cost of phase two (and frankly it's somewhat early right now to give a hard figure on the exact final cost) we stand ready at the Federal level to provide 2/3 of the cost under the terms of President Nixon's Public Transportation Assistance Act of 1970.

Construction of phase two should move somewhat quicker -- what with the experience gained during construction of the initial segment. Our timetable calls for a 5-mile double-guideway system running from Mile High Stadium, across the river, through Centennial Park, through the Auraria Educational Complex into downtown -- where the two guideways will split apart into a one-way loop in the Central Business District. Then the system will leave the Central Business District as dual-guideway once again, going out Colfax to a terminus at Colorado Boulevard.

We would hope to have all of that in operation by the spring of 1977.

And by that time, people from San Francisco will be coming here to see what's new!

It's important to note that the system will provide for co-ordination with other existing and planned transportation systems -- including bus routes, automobile parking lots, bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways. Transportation consultants call this "interfacing;" I call it common sense.

And that's about it. This is a new system, yes. But it is a "common sense" system.

There are at least four other cities in the Nation wondering how Denver happened to beat them out -- but on balance, using the criteria I mentioned -- we are happy with our decision.



Now it's up to Denver to get behind this project with enthusiasm, with imagination and with courage. We have no intention of doing this alone. President Nixon is firm in his determination that the Federal Government should give the most help to those communities that are willing to help themselves the most -- and I know Senator Allott agrees.

We hope that Denver will look upon this date -- October 12, 1972 -- as being extremely significant. Perhaps it takes a Cabinet member of Italian ancestry to remind you that prior to the passage of the Monday holiday law, October 12 was always celebrated as Columbus Day; a day for daring, a day for vision, a day for new horizons.

Let that tradition continue here in Denver -- and from now on Monday will be the holiday, and October 12 will be "PRT Day," the day Denver took a giant step forward into the future.

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