



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE LOTUS CLUB, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1972, 7:30 P.M.

I am delighted that Congressman Ford urged that I accept your invitation to be here. He is a dedicated American, a great leader, and I have enjoyed his friendship and support for many years.

It has been men like Gerry who have made it possible for my Department to carry out the mandate President Nixon presented me with when he invited me to be Secretary of Transportation ... a mandate to reform, revamp, revitalize and regroup the components of America's transportation network. As I look back now I wonder that I had the audacity to accept that mandate ... but I'm glad I did. Under President Nixon's vigorous leadership, and with strong bi-partisan support in the Congress, we have traveled a long way towards our objectives. Since January 20, 1969, President Nixon's efforts to modernize transportation, increase safety and improve service has been unequalled. Under his leadership, transportation legislation has been enacted that is reshaping the face of America.

These first four years of Richard Nixon's Presidency have contained more transportation initiatives and legislation than have occurred since the Interstate Highway System began under President Eisenhower. Now, two decades later, that highway system is 80 percent complete and we have continued our program to develop, improve and extend our other highways across the country -- the primary, secondary, and farm-to-market roads. Without in any way damaging this support however, we must work for a truly balanced transportation system and provide intermodal mobility for all Americans. And that's what we are doing.

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The Airport and Airways Development Act of 1970 has more than quadrupled the resources available for airports, and has tripled the funds for master and regional airport planning.

Airline flight delays have been cut in half over the past two years, and those delays are less than 1/3 of what they were in 1969.

Rail passenger service in the United States has been rescued from oblivion and is being restored to respectability. Amtrak ridership and revenues are rising significantly.

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that highway safety has a high priority in this Administration. Fifty five thousand deaths a year is certainly a National disgrace ... a tragedy of unacceptable proportions. President Nixon has made it very clear that he is dedicated to taking every possible step towards making our highways, our cars, and our drivers safer and more protective of human life. The highway death rate now stands at 4.70 per 100 million miles driven. That's the lowest in our National history and a reduction of 14 1/2 percent from the 5.50 rate of five years ago.

The Safe Boating Act of 1971 has authorized the Coast Guard to establish and enforce minimum safety standards for boats and related equipment. This, coupled with our Merchant Marine Safety Program, will contribute significantly to the safety of our waterways.

The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970 has brought this Nation to grips with a sickness which only a few years ago seemed incurable... the improvement and rejuvenation of transit systems in trouble all across the nation.

President Nixon came to office committed to the attainment of across-the-board improvement of all facets of transportation, and he recognized early that our biggest "catch up" job was in the restoration of public transportation to a place of true utility in our society. The President believes we must now do for public transportation ... bus, subway, surface rail and the new "people movers" ... what we did for America's highway system. He clearly re-affirmed this in his State of the Union Message when he said: "In the past two decades highway building was our first priority, and our greatest success story. Now we must write a similar success story for mass transportation in the 1970's."

Right now, we are well beyond the first chapter of that story, and we must continue to write new chapters every day, if we are to continue to keep pace with the thrust and vigor of the current Administration. We've gone from \$125 million a year in 1968 to the billion dollar a year level now in public transportation -- and we fully intend to do much more.

We in the Department of Transportation feel we have come a long way towards achieving our goals, but in truth, we have been led a long way by the dynamic, vigorous and insistent leadership of President Nixon's Administration ... a leadership that is determined that every Department of the Government move towards the improvement of life for all Americans. His leadership is bringing about a realistic, workable end to the Vietnam war. His leadership has maintained a successful peace-keeping effort in the volatile Middle East.



And it was his leadership that brought about the opening relations with mainland China, and improvement of our relations with Russia. Richard Nixon, has indeed taken the Presidency to the world. He has made extended trips to Europe and Asia. He has made historic trips to China and Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Poland, he has visited Mexico and Canada ... all designed to reassert America's leadership in world affairs.

But the same dynamic vigor, the same insistence has been equally apparent at home.

During the past three years and ten months, President Nixon has made significant progress towards curbing inflation. And he has very definitely shifted the economy into high gear ... much to the chagrin of some issue-seeking liberals.

Indicative of our robust National economic health is the fact that the growth rate of our Gross National Product ... 8.3 percent ... leads the world. Employment is at an all-time high, with 82 million workers. The rate of inflation has been cut in half from the August 1971 figure. But perhaps even more importantly, the real wage of the average American worker has gained more than 4 percent in the past year. This means \$200 in new purchasing power ... equal to two extra weekly paychecks in a year.

Certainly these are all significant and "provable" accomplishments, but I think we are overlooking something else. I think we are overlooking the change in tone and direction ... the realignment of atmosphere that made these new programs and policies possible. Only a few years ago, our Government was in disrepute, both at home and abroad.

Our friends overseas, deeply concerned about our internal divisions, were beginning to feel that they could no longer rely on the United States to play a stable leadership role in the world scene. At home, Americans lacked confidence in their Government and even in themselves. Our cities were being consumed by the flames of civil disorder, and our colleges and universities were in a state of constant disruption from confrontations and violence. Our economy was disintegrating in an inflationary spiral that was cyclonic, and many of our domestic programs were "will-o-the-wisp" unrealities. It was the pervasive ... and permissive atmosphere of the times.

Fortunately, it is also a bygone era. The confidence-gap has been closed. There are no longer dire predictions of the ultimate collapse of our Government. The threats to our Nation's security -- both from home and abroad -- have been abated and the tensions have been reduced sharply. We are, in fact, living in a better world; not a utopia yet, but still a better world. Most of the causes for unrest and civil disobedience have been relieved or removed. "Rebellion" on the campus has directed itself towards "change" within the system, and our colleges and universities have become citadels of learning rather than bastions of revolt. Over 80 cities have been able to report an appreciable drop in their crime rate in the past year. Surely this realignment of atmosphere, this change of tone, this finding of direction are the result of dynamic leadership.



Today, as a result of President Nixon's programs, we are on the threshold of a strong economic resurgence ... a resurgence built upon an effective free-enterprise economy. We are re-establishing a sense of morality and ethics at home, and we are regaining respect abroad.

Now I have gone on at some length here this evening with a recounting of accomplishments -- an obvious endorsement of efforts being made, work being done.

And in all honesty, I would not call this a political speech! I have been telling it like it is, because I think there is a heck of a lot more that is right in America than there is that is wrong! This is still the greatest Nation on the face of the earth, and I think people ought to stand up and say so!

I have been doing so at every opportunity -- with a heavy campaign schedule, yes. But I will continue to look for what is right and what is good -- and talk about it long after election day has passed -- because there has never been a moment in my life when I haven't been able to say, "I'm proud to be an American."

By the same token, I am proud that you invited me to be here with you; proud to stand in support of my good friend, Gerry Ford; proud to have the opportunity to participate in the Government of my Nation; and proudest of all to serve in the Administration of a man I admire and respect.

Thank you.

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