



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW ENGLAND DAILY NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION AT THE MARRIOTT MOTOR HOTEL, NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1972, 11:45 A.M.

I am pleased to announce today a federal grant in the amount of \$32.8 million for the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA). The funds are for new lightweight rail cars for the Green Line, to serve the busy downtown Boston area. This grant will enable the MBTA to buy 150 to 175 new "second generation" trolley cars -- enough to replace about half the existing fleet.

Improved service is vital to this high density line. The present cars are 20 to 30 years old. Replacement parts are practically unattainable. Many of the cars are uncomfortable, noisy, costly to maintain, and as out-of-date as yesterday's newspaper.

The grant we are announcing today is actually the second phase in the Green Line modernization program. Last February we authorized \$25.4 million through our Urban Mass Transportation Administration to refurbish trackage, provide adequate maintenance facilities, upgrade power capacity, and acquire new signal and communications equipment. These improvements, together with the new larger cars, will give the Green Line a new look and a new ride to make central business district travel more pleasant and more efficient.

There's also a money-saving aspect to this streetcar acquisition program. Under an UMTA Research, Development and Demonstration Grant, MBTA officials were able to work with the San Francisco Municipal Railway Authority (MUNI) in developing vehicle specifications suitable to both. So while there's nothing "Toonerville" about any of today's trolley prices, the unit costs should be substantially lower under the joint order than they would have been under separate bids.

Today's grant, along with ten earlier ones, brings the total Federal Capital Grant Funding for the MBTA to more than \$153 million over the past 3 1/2 years. During the same period we have awarded \$32.3 million to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, primarily for improvements to commuter service on Penn Central's New Haven Division; \$1 million to Rhode Island, for new buses; and some \$2.4 million in technical study grants to various cities in all six New England states -- for a total of \$189.5 million in capital equipment and study grants. We have other applications pending that are getting careful consideration and we don't intend to neglect any opportunity to put better transportation within the reach of more people.

Nationally, urban public transportation is now a billion dollar Federal program, up from less than \$135 million a year when this administration took office. That's an 8 fold increase. This new emphasis stems from President Nixon's conviction that good public transportation is essential to our cities, and therefore deserves a new lease on life.

Too often in the past public transportation has been taken for granted, noticed only when in trouble -- missed only when it vanishes. It's like the old song: "You Never Miss the Water 'Til the Well Runs Dry." When a bus or rapid rail system goes out of business, it not only leaves a void in the urban transportation network, the loss of public transit adds to the costs the community must share in bearing the burden of additional automobiles.

That's why President Nixon is working to reinstate public transportation -- to sustain it where it is failing, to repair it where it is faltering, to renew it where it is aging, and to revitalize it wherever the public need is not being met.

But when we talk about rebuilding public transportation, people sometimes get the idea that we're going to quit building highways. Or that urban travelers will be forced to leave their cars at home in favor of the transit or the trolley or the bus.

For too long now, the view has prevailed that public transportation and private transportation are somehow contradictory and mutually exclusive.

The notion also persists in some quarters that helping the cities meet their urban transportation needs will cut into the rural road-building program.

Let me assure you there is no danger of jeopardizing the primary and secondary highway network. Those programs would not be adversely affected under any proposal the administration has made. And better public transportation facilities will, in fact, improve the freedom of movement in the urban environment, not impede it.

As I told an audience recently, 50 years ago we needed public transit in America because not everyone could afford a car; today we need it because nearly everyone can afford a car.

If commuters have a choice -- if travelers have access to public transportation that's competitive with the car in comfort, convenience, and speed -- then more people will use the public system. The city expressways that are now choked with five mile-per-hour traffic can again become the 60 mile-per-hour freeways they were designed to be.

I remember the old days -- when it took six or seven hours to get across Massachusetts from the New York State Line to Boston. Now with our great highways, we can travel the length of the state in 2 1/2 hours...at least you can get to within a dozen miles of Boston. You can get to where we are right now -- at Route 128.

But those last 10 or 12 miles -- the congested urban area -- chew up another hour or more of travel time, cause wear-and-tear on the car as well as on the driver, increase the risk of accidents, and take a high toll in lost time and wasted fuel. Even the Mass Pike extension is overloaded at peak travel times.

I can tell you we have studied this problem from every conceivable angle, and while there is no single solution that suits every situation, the best approach to the decongestion of our city streets and expressways is to make better use of the potentials in public transportation

That's why we approved grants of \$50 million back in 1969 to relocate and extend the Orange Line, why we authorized \$22 million in 1971 to extend and improve the South Shore Line, and why I was in Boston just last month for the groundbreaking of MBTA's new \$29 million Maintenance Center.

That's why similar grants are going out to cities all across the country. We're investing federal funds in public transportation because we believe good public transportation is essential for the 25 percent of the American people who don't have cars, and beneficial to the 75 percent who do.

(Ad-Lib regarding administration proposals and congressional activity.)

We believe that local option -- flexibility in funding -- is vital if the people responsible for a city's growth and character are to be able to act freely in determining what kind of a community they want -- free of federal apron strings but not cut off from federal aid. That is the sense of the \$30.2 billion Revenue Sharing Bill President Nixon is signing today in Philadelphia, and it is the sense of our program for Urban Transportation Assistance.

We will pursue this matter when Congress reconvenes. In the meantime we shall continue to renovate transportation systems, to innovate new technologies -- people-movers, tracked air cushion vehicles, better subway and surface systems; and articulate new proposals to bring public transportation into the mainstream of American mobility and into greater favor with the urban traveler.

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