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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE FOR GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONIES, MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (M.B.T.A.), SOUTH BAY MAINTENANCE CENTER, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1972

This is another red letter day for the Red Line, and for all the people of Greater Boston.

Last September, I was here with you to dedicate the South Shore Extension.

I'm glad to be back today.

In the past 12 months more than 6 million passengers have traveled the South Shore Extension.

Down in Washington, the busiest commuter artery into the City from Northern Virginia -- the Shirley Highway -- now carries more rush-hour travelers by bus than by car.

In Philadelphia, where I spoke earlier this week, the popularity of the Lindenwold Rapid Transit line has actually reduced highway travel time over the Philadelphia - Woodbury, New Jersey route. Other road trips over routes not paralleled by rapid rail now take 16 to 30 percent longer than they did 10 years ago.

Public transportation is gaining new respect ... and new respectability. In fact, the return of rapid transit may prove to be the big comeback story of this decade. President Nixon has promised to make mass transit as big a "success story" as the highway program has been over the past two decades.

Not public transit as it was, but public transportation as it should be.

A choice between a clean, dependable, air-conditioned automobile -- and a bus or rail car that is unclean, unkept and uncertain -- is no choice at all.

In short, merely reviving public transportation is not enough. Our task is to reform it, renew it, and revitalize it.

We must re-create public transportation to make it better and strive to keep it better.

That's why the facility to be built on this site is so important. Public transportation must be kept up, or it quickly runs down. Unlike our cars, we can't trade our rapid transit vehicles in every two years.

Lack of proper care and maintenance over the past 30-or-so years has been one of the major causes of declining ridership and wholesale disenchantment with public transportation.

We cannot allow that mistake to be made again. When this \$29 million maintenance center opens for business late next year, its operation will be as vital to the effectiveness of the M.B.T.A. as the cars themselves, the rails they run on, or the people who operate them. In addition to enhancing the safety and the dependability of the system, this center will help assure that public transit which starts out spic and span stays that way.

There is still a deeper significance to this groundbreaking event.

This month marks the 75th Anniversary of subway service in Boston .. the Diamond Jubilee Year of the first subway in North America.

But no one here is looking back to the "good old days." For all of the Commonwealth's proud history and noble past, the best days for Bostonians are always the ones ahead -- the greatest challenge the one at hand. Since 1969, when President Nixon came to office committed to the betterment of transportation for all the people of America, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority has received a total of \$121 million in Federal grants -- \$35.9 million this past year alone. Some \$100 million in additional grants for the Boston area are now pending. And I assure you we will do our utmost to fund those that are of greatest urgency and value to the people of Greater Boston.

It is the President's goal, as it is my own, to keep needed Federal funds flowing to the cities for transportation purposes. Because when you correct transportation imbalances and inequities, you help solve social and human needs.

Prior to 1969, public transportation funding at the Federal level was meager. The Urban Mass Transportation Administration had a small staff, a shoestring budget, and no guarantee of funding continuity.

Under President Nixon, annual funding for urban mass transit has become a billion dollar budget item. And ten days ago I went up to Capitol Hill and recommended that an additional \$3 billion from the General Fund be obligated and earmarked for public transportation programs through Fiscal Year 1977. Moreover, we are strongly on record in this Administration as favoring greater freedom and flexibility on the part of our states and cities in the use of available transportation funds, including usage of a part of the Highway Trust Fund.

We must do more, throughout the country, of what you have done here. The examples set by Chicago and San Francisco and Boston must be the rule, not the exception, if public transit is to become the first-choice, first-class way to travel in the urban environment.

But we must do it now. Our needs won't wait.

That's why I'm glad I could be here today. Turning a shovelful of earth may be a symbolic and ceremonial gesture, but what it really means is that the hardest part of a job like this is already behind us.

I know something of the effort it has taken to arrive at this moment. I am proud to have had a part in making this day possible.

In the larger sense, that is the job we must do throughout the Nation.

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