



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1000
#19094
NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

75-S-72

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE FOR CONFERENCE ON PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH, WASHINGTON, D. C., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1972

"Brainpower" -- pure and simple -- is absolutely vital in these most complicated times in which we live, and this morning I would like to discuss with you the nature of some of the broad, inter-disciplinary problems affecting the vitality of national transportation and to emphasize the urgent need for universities to tackle some of these problems while they fulfill their classical educational responsibility.

Society needs a new quality of excellence: an incentive to weld academic idealism to innovative research that will serve your country. So let me pose a challenge: that your works be directed toward improving the quality of our society.

Your Government has a great deal of confidence in the ability of universities to accept this kind of invitation and to make constructive contributions to our national life that transcend the education of our young. And your contributions are especially needed in transportation.

What are some of the problems we face in national transportation? Let me "throw the book" at you -- as I list a number of questions that face us, questions that need answers, answers we hope we can get from you!

(1) How do we arrest the accelerating decay and abandonment of public transportation in our urban areas?

(2) How do we manage the circulation of 100 million automobiles to restore traffic rates above "jogging" speeds at rush hours?

(3) How do we reconcile our environmental effluent policy with the increasing premium on fuel conservation? (Do you know that the impact of the 1974 N.E.P.A. standards, adding to preceding ones, will imply a net decrease in engine efficiency of about 40 percent?)

- more -

(4) How can we accommodate the special mobility problems of the elderly and the handicapped?

(5) What are the necessary ingredients of effective local planning and organization to permit constructive modernization of transportation facilities?

(6) How should the inter-modal Northeast Corridor Transportation System be organized? (Public corporation? Government corporation? private consortium?)

(7) How can we significantly cut those 55,000 highway fatalities?

(8) How should the public transportation concept be marketed?

(9) How do we improve the under-utilization of railroads (now running at about 7 percent) and airlines (about 50 percent)?

(10) What are the peculiar problems of operating vis-a-vis capital subsidies? How might they be overcome? By whom?

(11) What kinds of cities do we want by the year 2,000? What is our land use policy? What is our natural resource depletion policy? Do we wish, and, if so, how do we wish to influence the level and distribution of population?

(12) What should be the role of governmental regulation in the transportation industry, if any? What is the case for nationalizing all or part of the industry?

(13) How do we smooth out demand at off-peak hours with creative low capital intensive projects? How can we improve demand responsiveness?

We might boil these questions down to the following programmatic objectives:

- to improve transportation capacity and service;
- to reduce total transportation costs;
- to reduce adverse environmental impact;
- to make transportation safer;
- to develop advanced transportation systems;
- to improve research and development efficiency and control.

This kind of goal orientation will demand that we take sober account of soft and hard disciplines that, together, illuminate the path for progress in some tough problems that confront us all.

President Nixon articulated where we are heading in national research in his March 16, 1972 "Message on Science and Technology:"

"We must appreciate that the progress we seek requires a new partnership in science and technology -- one which brings together the Federal Government, private enterprise, State and local governments and our universities and research centers in a coordinated, cooperation effort to serve the national interests." The University Research Program we are discussing today provides a means to achieve this goal. It constitutes the transportation component of research support applied to national need and redresses an historic disproportion between the immediacy of research problems and the allocation of research resources. (In Fiscal Year 1970, for example, the DOT expenditures for university research represented only one percent of total Federal research funding at universities. The NASA commitment alone to university research was 13 times larger than that of DOT.)

The purpose of the DOT program of university research is to ensure that the resources of the higher education community are brought to bear effectively on national, State, and local transportation problems, the component objectives are:

(1) To stimulate relevant, high-quality and innovative transportation research at universities for the creation of new concepts, techniques and knowledge.

(2) To enhance the effectiveness of President Nixon's policy that the functions and decisions of government take place as close to the people as possible by expanding the knowledge base and talent pool available for transportation decision-making at the State and local levels and by promoting closer relationships among the academic community, government agencies at all levels and the transportation industry.

(3) To attract more of the Nation's best young talent into careers in transportation.

(4) To stimulate industry and State and local agency sponsorship of university-based transportation research.

The accomplishment of these objectives will require a broad perspective. We will need to seek solutions to consumer problems in terms of a suit of modes, carefully inter-connected and integrated with land use planning to ensure future as well as present usage patterns are well served.

The funding level in Fiscal Year 1973 for the DOT program of university research is \$4 million, a level approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) at the White House. The creation and funding commitment of this program provides assurance of a new and responsive point of contact at the highest level of DOT and demonstrates the sincerity of the Department's determination to involve universities in substantive transportation research.

The content of the program evolved from discussions with over 200 leaders in industry, Federal, State, and local governments and universities; from a review of similar programs in other Federal agencies; and from past experience in the Department, especially in the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. An exhaustive evaluation of insights accumulated from these discussions and reviews led to the realization that universities and colleges offer valuable and unique research capabilities that the Federal, State and local governments and transportation industry at large have begun to tap.

The previous intensity of interaction between DOT and the educational community has been less than that of other Federal agencies. The Department simply has under-utilized the special and unique contribution that universities can make across a broad spectrum in the vital transportation sector of our society.

The program of university research will challenge and support the innovative capability of our Nation's universities and contribute to the solution of pressing transportation problems. I am confident of the prognosis for this new effort because of the impressive results which have been obtained from the approximately \$10 million of modally related research that DOT has supported in the past three or four years. (For example, by Southern University (Baton Rouge) in developing rural transportation concepts for the elderly.)

We have had excellent participation by minority universities in the past and are confident they will be leading participants in this new program.

We hope that universities will involve more women in their own transportation programs -- both at faculty and student levels of involvement. The current prominence of women in vital consumer affairs (which impact critically upon our transportation issues) is but a harbinger of a much more transcendent role in classically masculine professions. Indeed, my own Director of Consumer Affairs is Miss Ann Uccello, the former Mayor of Hartford.

The problems of transportation are multifarious and complex, requiring solutions that marry hard and soft disciplines. Yes, economics, sociology, and politics must meld with technical and systems engineering. My university friends advise me that kind of task is not easy; but, then, no worthwhile challenges ever are. Worthy goals require worthy vision, energy, and work.

I can assure you that the Department will do everything within its power to bring about a smooth courtship and a long, happy, and productive marriage between our respective institutions. We share a common conception of our mission: to solve the mobility problems that will engulf us over the next 30 years. Our expectations for this program place it among our top priorities for 1973 despite the legitimate and often urgent claims of competing programs. But the final accuracy of that judgement will be validated not by what we proclaim in government; but rather, by the creativity, industry, and idealism which you direct toward building a better country while educating our young.

Thank you very much.

#####