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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE
BEFORE THE CANTON TRAFFIC CLUB, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1969, CANTON,
OHIO

During the half-century that you are commemorating, this nation has built a transportation system that is the envy of the world. Our vast network of rails, highways and airways guarantees fast, flexible delivery of people and goods that was undreamed-of back in 1919.

And Canton has been at the center of this progress. Today, you have the nation and the world at your fingertips.

Yet all the changes of the past 50 years are minor in comparison with the opportunities and challenges that will open up between now and the year 2019.

Both freight and passenger transportation will evolve rapidly.

The first big breakthrough will be the tracked air cushion vehicle. A prototype called the "aerotrain" is already in operation in France. I saw it last summer just before it went into operation. Since then, several of my top assistants have been on it, traveling at speeds of up to 165 miles per hour.

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The TACV floats on a thin cushion of air above a concrete guideway shaped like an inverted "T". There is no friction to speak of. It is fast, it is safe. The guideway can be elevated, at ground level, or even underground.

Within recent weeks the Rohr Corporation of California -- an aerospace firm -- bought the American rights to the "aerotrains". Under the agreement, the French will continue testing and researching, while we in this country will pursue an intensive development program to bring an operational system on-line as soon as possible.

In aviation progress, I suspect that 50 years from now, nuclear power will have been harnessed and miniaturized to the extent that it will be used to propel vehicles through the space that surrounds the earth.

I am also quite certain that the new generation of aircraft that is being developed right now -- the so-called "jumbo jets" and the Supersonic Transport -- will set the pace in terms of aircraft capacity.

After all, the 747 will carry nearly 500 passengers, and the United States SST is designed for 300.

Yes, aircraft of the future will be faster, bigger, quieter, and will be used more efficiently. I think it will be standard operating procedure, in the 21st century, for individual aircraft to be making three, four, or perhaps five round trips a day to the other side of the world.

Now let's take a quick look at the matter of personal ground transportation -- and I'm talking about the family car, about small local delivery vehicles, and about short-haul, small-volume intercity traffic.

First of all, I do not anticipate the sudden and total demise of the passenger automobile.

It may undergo certain changes in size and shape, it will certainly have to produce less air pollution than it produces right now, it may well move faster and more efficiently over superhighways that have built-in electronic guidance systems, but overall, American families will still have their own vehicles -- and will be able to go where they want to, when they want to.

The great change will come, I suspect, in usage.

First of all, there will be alternatives. Public transportation will be built in large and medium-sized cities that is clean, fast, efficient and attractive.

Second, there may be less reason for people to leave home. It is altogether possible that 50 years from now our children and grandchildren may not have to go to the store, or to work, or to school.

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Housewives could do their shopping through a home computer console, and goods would be delivered through a sort of underground "horizontal dumb-waiter" that serves every home just like water and sewer lines do today.

Breadwinners might be able to stop commuting to work entirely, and communicate to work instead. We wouldn't need school buses either. After all, with the development of three-dimensional television the essential parts of man -- his intellect and his personality -- can be communicated with lifelike reality anywhere in the world. That is an exaggeration, of course. What we will be more likely to see is a greater use of personal vehicles for recreation oriented travel, and more use of public transportation for routine, daily trips.

In addition, we will see a great increase in the use of delivery systems rather than haphazard duplication.

Yes, whatever you can imagine in transportation is very likely to come true.

It is only a matter of time and money. We have the imagination and the ingenuity. We have the technology, and we have the need.

And when I speak of need, I cannot look to 50 years from now. Or even to 5 years from now. The greatest challenges in transportation in the history of this nation are upon us right now -- today.

We cannot wait for 50 years. We must refine and develop what we have now, and we must move fast if we are to keep from being smothered by the fantastically rising demand for transportation services.

In the next 10 years, air passenger miles will triple. The volume of automobile traffic will increase by 50-percent, railroad ton-miles will be up by 25-percent, and trucks will be carrying 50-percent more than they are today. And as these trends continue -- and we have every reason to expect they will -- we will have to double the capacity of our transportation system within the next two decades.

We must act now to prepare for this demand.

First of all, we are determined to complete the interstate highway system. This is the greatest public works project in human history and has already produced major economies for shippers and motorists.

When completed, the interstate system will account for only one percent of the mileage in this country, but it will carry 20 percent of the traffic. Not only does the interstate system speed the hauling of goods, it also saves one life per year for every mile we build, because of the superior safety standards that are required.

Our economy is growing so fast, however, that even the interstate system cannot carry the full load. The rails will continue to play a major role in the movement of America's merchandise and bulk shipments.

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As our Federal Railroad Administrator Reg Whitman points out, "If all the railroads stopped operating tomorrow, alternative modes would be hard-put to pick up even ten percent of their business."

This Administration is committed to efficient utilization of our national assets, and there is no question that this nation's railroad system is one of the greatest of those assets.

The first step toward having a productive rail system is to have a safe rail system, and for that reason our first piece of railroad legislation has been a rail safety bill.

We seek to bring to the Federal level standards for rolling stock, tracks, roadbeds, signal systems and employee qualifications. Such a bill is urgently needed to maintain the role of railroading in our economy.

In air transport, this Administration recognized early in the year that we are woefully short of controlled air space, and woefully short of airfield space. As I told several Congressional committees, "We have a heck of a lot of catching up to do."

They must have been listening, because our Airfield-Airways bill passed the House by the respectable margin of 337 to 6, and we are hopeful of getting an identical -- or near identical -- bill through the Senate and onto the President's desk.

Our program calls for a \$2.5 billion to upgrade our air control system -- the radar, the computers, the instrument landing systems that are so essential to all-weather safety in the air.

It also calls for \$2.5 billion -- to be matched with local funds -- for the construction and expansion of our airfields.

Our people in the Federal Aviation Administration tell me that right now -- not 5 or 10 years from now, but right now -- we need some 900 new airports and we need improvements at over 2,700 existing airfields.

And let me add this point: it won't do much good to try to untangle traffic jams in the air if we do nothing to relieve the crush on the access roads leading to our airports. Highways must be supplemented by new, fast, efficient modes of transportation. And the same is true within our cities.

Right now, over 70-percent of the people of America live on 2-percent of the land. In other words, in our cities. There is no question -- we are an urban society.

And in recent years, while our cities have been expanding, some 235 bus and transit companies in cities large and small have gone out of business.

This contributes directly to a great many of our social ills, in that

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low-income people are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to get to where the jobs are.

We believe that if job training centers for dropouts are to be used, if health centers for mothers and their babies are to be effective, if evening college classes for ambitious youngsters are to have their full potential, then these facilities must be accessible by clean, efficient, inexpensive public transportation.

Like public safety and public health and welfare, public transportation is a community responsibility.

Again, this Administration has decided to act before the crisis becomes totally unmanageable. President Nixon has asked Congress to approve a \$10 billion, 12 year public transportation bill -- with an immediate obligation of \$3.1 billion for the first 5 years of the program. What has long been needed is a long-range program, with Federal funds that the cities can bank on. This is what this program provides.

The money would be used for modern, high capacity transit-type systems in our larger cities -- and for sophisticated flexible bus-type systems in our medium and smaller cities.

The City of Canton, for instance, could derive substantial benefit from this legislation. I think it would be of particular interest here, because the bill does provide for assistance to privately-owned systems as well as publicly-owned companies.

Our people in the Urban Mass Transportation Administration are fully aware of the public transportation situation here in Canton, and you can be sure that we are eager to help in any way we can.

Both the Airfield-Airways Bill and the Public Transportation Act of 1969 represent forward-looking planning that is essential to the orderly growth of this nation.

Without either one, the commerce and economy of America could be seriously impaired.

In addition to the bills I mentioned, we are also working on a boating safety bill, a trade facilitation bill, and a bill that will provide relief for the nation's fast-disappearing passenger train service, among others.

I think it is apparent from the broad perspective I have presented here, that the Nixon Administration is determined to create a balanced transportation system for this country. We are aware that to achieve this goal many comfortable assumptions and hallowed practices may have to be dropped. We want to examine the possibility of de-regulating some industries. We want to give a fair hearing to the possibilities of intermodal ownership. We want to leave no stone unturned.

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Above all, however, this Administration is going to be practical in its attitude toward reform. The President has said, "We will not be reformers for the sake of reform, but we will seek changes where they are obviously necessary."

The next half-century can become a golden age of civilization if we learn tolerance and cooperation. We have already proven -- in this, the year of the Apollo flights -- that with courage and determination, we can reach almost any goal we choose.

In the next half-century, we can -- with courage and determination -- insure that our nation survives the onslaughts of congestion, poverty, pollution and immobility.

In the next half-century, we can achieve a transportation network designed on systems principles that will promote economic growth, meet social needs, and protect the environment. In short, a system which is in harmony with man.

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