



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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EXCERPTS OF SPEECH BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE ST. LOUIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
STOUFFER'S RIVERFRONT INN, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, DECEMBER 3, 1969

Mark Twain once wrote that St. Louis was "The entrance to a new era and an epoch of vibrance and eminence", and while I don't have the knack for words that he had, I can say that I am truly delighted to be with you this evening. St. Louis is truly a great city, and you are great people to be with.

Let me tell you a little about my own Department of Transportation and what we are trying to do.

First, we are a young Department. Established only some two and one-half years ago, we should just be learning to walk. However, we are off and running.

We are active in the air, on land, and at sea. In the air, of course, we have the Federal Aviation Administration. On land, it's the Federal Highway Administration, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and the Federal Railroad Administration. At sea, we are proud to have the U. S. Coast Guard as part of the Department of Transportation (The only branch of the armed services that is not within the Department of Defense). In addition, we operate the American side of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

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Other operating responsibilities include the Alaska Railroad, Washington National and Dulles International Airports, and we also administer the standard time-daylight time laws.

Altogether we have over 100,000 employees in the Department, and our annual budget runs to approximately \$8 billion.

The challenges that face us are equally impressive.

The demand for transportation services in this growing nation is terrific. For instance, air passenger miles have doubled in the past four years, and are expected to triple again in the next decade. Automobile usage will increase by 40% in the next 8 years. Rail freight is increasing by some 15 million ton-miles per day. Highway haulage is expected to increase by at least 50% in the coming 10 years.

American technology, American industry, is going nearly all-out to cope with this demand. We are manufacturing motor vehicles at such a pace that there will be a net increase of 10,000 more cars and trucks on our highways tomorrow at this time than there are today.

Our aircraft fleet -- both commercial and general aviation -- is growing both in number of airplanes and in the size of new aircraft.

We are close to completion of our magnificent interstate highway system, with 1975 as the target date for completion of the full 42,500 mile network. The interstate system, by the way, will constitute only 2% of our total mileage, yet will carry some 20% of the traffic. Beyond this obvious efficiency, we know that for every 5 miles of interstate highway we build, we save one life per year, on a continuing basis because of superior design and engineering standards. If there were no other reason to complete the interstate system this would be enough, as we are killing over a thousand of our fellow Americans every week on our streets and highways. So, yes, we are working in the finest American tradition to keep pace with the demands that are facing us.

But what has been done is by no means enough. Last winter President Nixon directed the Department of Transportation to come up with a national transportation policy -- a yardstick by which future development and expansion could be measured, a guideline for an efficient systems approach to the movement of people and goods in this country. And our early studies have shown the demands of the next 20 years will be phenomenal. When our research people first brought me the figures, I didn't believe them. But they are true. In the next 20 years we will have to build as much transportation capacity in this nation as has been built since the birth of this nation.

We know that we cannot fulfill this demand by simply doubling what we now have in place.

We already have one linear mile of roadway for every square mile of land in the country. We already have congestion and delay in our airways. We already have air pollution and traffic jams on our city streets. And coupled with this, we have increasing concern for our environment, the land we live on, the open space that have always been hallmarks of American freedom and liberty.

Rather, a new dimension in thinking is required. We must find new ways, new approaches, and we must do this soon.

Earlier I mentioned Mark Twain, and his comments on the city of St. Louis. Let's quote the bard of the Mississippi in a wider context now. He once wrote: "A foreigner is a person who does things because they have always been done that way before. An American, however, is a person who does things because they haven't been done before."

Now is the time for us to live up to these words, and to new things in a new and changing world.

Let's take a look first at our cities, and our urban transportation problems. The thinking of this Administration is that just about all of our urban social concerns -- crime, unemployment, health, education and recreation -- relate directly to the ability of a city's people to move around. We know that job training centers, employment opportunities, health facilities, educational institutions, even parks and zoos -- aren't much good unless there is a clean, fast, safe, efficient way to get to them.

We know, for instance, that greater St. Louis can expect a 40% increase in population by 1990, and that employment centers will -- by and large -- be scattered in a ring several miles out from the central business district.

We know that despite a first-rate highway system in this area, the mobility that will be required can never be solved by highways alone.

We know that large volumes of people will have to be accommodated at high speeds with safety and with a high degree of regularity.

And it is our thinking that the only solid, long-lasting answer to these long-range problems will be a revitalization of public transportation.

We in Washington know that the time has come, in St. Louis as well as in many other cities, to get the job off the drawing board and under construction.

I know that here in St. Louis there is a great awareness of the public transportation problems. I know that the Chamber's Mass Transit Committee is deeply concerned with St. Louis' transportation challenges.

I read with great interest the report of Governor Hearn's fact-finding tour of transportation systems in Canada -- a tour in which a number of Chamber people participated.

I know that my good friend Mayor Drapeau of Montreal was here in October, and addressed a Chamber luncheon on the topic of "Mass Rapid Transit".

We know you need a rapid transit system if the gateway to the West is not to become a bottleneck in and of itself.

We also know that this takes money -- money that the cities and the states could not possibly raise by themselves. Consequently, President Nixon and I have submitted to the Congress the Public Transportation Act of 1969, calling for a \$10 billion investment over a 12 year period to assist cities and transportation authorities to build, expand, and extend public transportation in our urban areas.

The Bill is now on the Hill, in committee, and we just recently worked out a compromise with the Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Affairs to assure that \$ 3.1 million dollars (the funding for the first 5 years of the program) can be obligated as soon as the Bill is passed and signed, so that cities may plan, over the long-term, for the sizeable capital projects the Bill calls for.

This legislation could go far in solving so many of our urban social ills. It is legislation that cities such as St. Louis have needed and asked for over the years.

And now let me turn to another area of challenge and concern, the area of air transportation. I mentioned earlier the tremendous growth that is happening in air travel.

This growth comes at a time when we are faced with a need for expansion and improvement at some 2700 existing airfields, and a need for 900 brand new airports. It comes at a time when we are woefully short of controlled air space in the skies of America, a time when better electronic guidance, better radar, and computerized flight control are absolutely essential.

Right here in Missouri we have over \$12 million worth of fixed equipment, with over 160 Federal Aviation Administration employees in this city alone. But it is not enough.

So the President has moved swiftly to take action in air transportation as well. He has submitted to the Congress a program calling for \$2.5 billion in Federal money for the upgrading of our airways, and a similar \$2.5 billion (to be matched with local funds) for more and better airfields. We are fully aware that metropolitan airports, such as Lambert Field, are already operating at near-capacity. We recognize full well that if we are to have the benefits of air travel, we must invest in improvements across the Country.

Our Airfield/Airways Bill is already through the House, where it passed by the respectable margin of 337 to 6! We are extremely hopeful of getting an identical -- or near-identical -- Bill through the Senate, and having the legislation on the President's desk by the end of this month.

So you see, we are an action Administration -- determined to grapple with the multitude of challenges that face us in the years immediately ahead.

But none of this can be accomplished in this great Nation without support from the front.

This is one reason why I appreciate the opportunity to come to St. Louis to be here with you this evening. With a full understanding of the challenges and problems that face this Nation, this Nation will prosper and succeed.

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