



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE COUNCIL OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, ATLANTA, GEORGIA, NOVEMBER 22, 1969 AND AT THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATES, COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, NOVEMBER 24, 1969

There is no doubt in my mind that state legislators, governors, and other officials -- all have a solid effect on the course of national government. You, of course, are much closer to the people than we are in Washington.

But at the same time, it has become increasingly clear in recent years that local and state government must rely on Washington for guidance and assistance in wide-ranging projects that surpass local and even state boundaries. I held that belief as a governor, as Chairman of the Governors' Conference, as President of this Council, and now as a member of the Federal Administration.

The lifestream of American government flows from the grass roots; we in Washington have the responsibility of providing guidance, encouragement, and those much-beloved tangible resources, "Federal Funds". But it is at the state level where the "action" is, and it is at the state level where the great popular interest is.

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And largely because of this revival of interest, the states find themselves as focal points in American Government.

Yes, the work being done at the state level now is crucial to our progress as a Nation, and it is similarly crucial to the efficiency and growth of our cities and towns.

And just look at the tremendous growth we are experiencing these days!

Our population is still increasing by 180-thousand per month. And most of it is concentrating in urban centers. Just 30 years from now our population will grow from its present 204-million to 330-million and 85 percent of our people will live in cities.

The irresistible urban trend of today will become the urban fact of tomorrow, when 40 percent of our people will be crammed into 2 or 3 regional cities spreading for hundreds of miles along both coasts and into the industrial heartland of the country.

This process means opportunity for many, but it is bringing in its train a whole raft of severe social dislocations: -- crime, unemployment, traffic jams, pollution, inadequate housing, overloaded school systems, and shifting moral values -- to name a few.

It also means that state governments find themselves spending more time coping with crises and less time initiating new policy.

These crises cost money too -- as all of you well know.

In fact, they cost too much money. Over the next ten years the states and the cities are going to run short by about 250-billion dollars more than they owe right now.

My friends, you can't borrow your way out. You can't tax your way out. And you can't opt out. Period.

Never before has there been a greater necessity for increased Federal-State cooperation.

Such cooperation is mandatory, if the people are to be served and this nation is to stay great.

President Nixon has taken firm decisive steps in this direction. One good example is his development of common boundaries for ten regional headquarters, starting with five Federal agencies.

It is his hope that eventually -- insofar as is practical -- all regional headquarters will be located in these ten cities, and all Federal regional offices will operate with common boundaries.

This is a great step forward. It will not only make it a great deal easier for state legislative leaders, governors, mayors -- and citizens -- to go to only one city with the variety of problems they may have, rather than four or five cities as is presently the case but more than this, it will enable the Federal government to avoid duplication, have a more streamlined operation, provide for a greater decentralization of Federal activities, and effect sizeable economies at the same time.

You and I know how essential it is for government at all levels to spend money prudently and efficiently with tax dollars getting harder and harder to come by.

The President has also proposed a program of revenue sharing for the states.

Although it is a modest beginning, it will be stepped up, and will provide dollars to the states.

Many have talked about revenue sharing in recent years, but no real action had been taken until now.

Another area where President Nixon has submitted a far-reaching plan is in the field of welfare.

You may or may not agree completely with the plan, but I am sure you recognize that welfare programs of the last quarter century -- although costing billions of dollars -- have not solved our problems.

The President's plan would, of course, relieve a substantial part of the burden now being carried by the states.

Along these lines, we all recognize that one of the greatest problems facing Federal, state, and local governments is the phenomenal rise in the cost of providing health services -- Medicaid, Medicare, and so forth.

I can assure you that this Administration is taking a good hard look at this problem. We must find a way to make these services available to those who need them, and do it efficiently. Otherwise there just will not be enough money in Federal, state, or local treasuries to pay the bill.

These are some of the most critical areas in Federal-State relations.

We want to work with you on these challenges, and with your support, suggestions and encouragement, I am sure solutions can be found.

Let me, now, bring to you some word from Washington on what we are doing in my own department -- what we hope to do, and what our feeling is about what we ought to be doing.

Beyond the obvious things, like the Federal-Aid Highway Programs, and the Federal funds available for the construction and expansion of airports, this Administration wants to work closely with state governments in matters of policy as well.

We feel that the states can be leaders in the development of comprehensive transportation systems, incorporating all modes of travel.

Ten states already have transportation departments of their own. Every state ought to be considering this.

About ten states have taken significant leadership in the planning and development of public transportation systems such as bus and rapid transit facilities. All states should do this -- rural as well as urban.

In the all-important matter of highway safety, we must have prompt support for compliance with the Highway Safety Act of 1966. It seems obvious to me that in this day of interstate highways -- when state lines are often only a few hours apart -- that we absolutely must have mandatory nationwide standards for safe vehicles and safe highways. It's simple common sense.

These are just a few of the areas where state government can take a solid, substantial leadership position in solving problems that are becoming increasingly critical.

On a more immediate basis, I would like to take just a moment to discuss current legislative proposals we now have before the Congress, and point out how they will affect progress in the states.

This Administration recognized early in its existence that basic transportation capability is essential to the times in which we live.

In our cities -- large and small -- we recognized that job training centers, health clinics, evening college classes, and even jobs in suburbia, weren't much use if there was no way to get to them.

We also knew that in recent years some 235 bus and transit companies -- serving cities large and small -- had gone out of business. In too many cities walls of immobility were suddenly thrust up to besiege the people who most needed to get out of the ghetto -- to get out into the world and become tax producers instead of welfare consumers.

We also recognized that the problem of public transportation was a multi-billion dollar problem, that had to be solved on a long-range basis.

We knew that the cities and states would never be able to cope with the crisis by themselves -- or even with Federal help -- unless the plan adopted was of long duration.

As a result, the President has submitted to the Congress the Public Transportation Act of 1969, calling for a 10-billion dollar, 12-year effort to save public transportation.

The Bill calls for the immediate obligation of \$3.1 billion for the first five years of the program, and will enable states and cities to initiate long-range projects with the assurance of Federal funds as the projects move ahead.

We have one other piece of major funding legislation, and that is our Airport-Airways Bill. This, too, is legislation that for the first time calls for sizeable investments on a long-range basis to cope with a rapidly snowballing problem.

Air passenger miles have doubled in the past four years. They are expected to triple in the next decade. The general aviation fleet will increase from the 100-thousand small planes we have today to 175-thousand by 1975.

We are woefully short of controlled air space, and we are woefully short of airfield space. As I told several Congressional committee sessions, "We have one heck of a lot of catching up to do."

They must have been listening, because our Bill passed the House by the respectable margin of 337 to 6, and we are extremely hopeful to get an identical -- or near-identical -- Bill through the Senate and onto the President's desk by the end of the month.

The legislation calls for \$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 in Federal funds -- to be matched by the states, cities, or airport authorities -- for the construction and expansion of our airfields.

Our people in the Federal Aviation Administration tell me that right now -- not 5 years or 10 years from now, but right now -- we need some nine hundred new airports, and we need improvements at over 27-hundred existing airfields.

We have other bills before the Congress -- or almost ready to go up to the Hill. I won't go into long detail because of time.

We have a Bill on rail safety. I was shocked to discover that the Federal government has a safety responsibility over only about 5 percent of the factors that could lead to disastrous train wrecks. Freight cars are no respecters of state lines. The Federal government working with state governments, must accept this responsibility.

We have a Bill on boating safety, an item of key importance as our U.S. Coast Guard performed some 45-thousand search and rescue missions last year and the rate is increasing.

Our policy development people are drafting a Bill on international trade facilitation.

Our Federal Railroad Administration is preparing legislation to deal with the crisis in rail passenger service.

So you see, even though the Department of Transportation is only two and one-half years old and should probably just be learning to walk, we are "off and running". We are an "action" Department and we are determined to face up foursquare to our responsibilities and our challenges.

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