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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE,  
BEFORE THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, IN MILAN, OCTOBER 6, 1969

I'm delighted to be here. I'm beginning to feel very much at home with the Chamber of Commerce. I am a former President of the Boston Chamber, and just about six weeks ago, I was addressing another local Chamber. That was in Fairbanks, Alaska. I haven't checked any maps yet, and haven't compared notes with my colleagues in the Cabinet, but I suspect that I now hold the record for distance among the Cabinet members as far as Chamber of Commerce speeches are concerned!

I don't know whether you people are fully aware of what's going on back in the United States in transportation. I know that when I speak around the country, in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or even in Washington, people seem surprised when I present them with a few cold hard facts.

Such as -- the population of the United States is increasing at the rate of about 180,000 a month. That's net gain.

Not only does this increasing population demand, more and more, efficient facilities for the fast movement of people and goods; this expanding population is, more and more, concentrating itself in huge urban centers, where transportation problems are the greatest.

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At the present time, 70-percent of the people in the States live on 2-percent of the land. By the end of the century, that is expected to concentrate to the point where 80-percent of the people live on 1-percent of the land. (And with all those city dwellers, what's going to happen when all of them decide to go to the country for the weekend at five o'clock on Friday afternoon!)

The present volume of transportation in America is already huge. And it's my Department's responsibility to not only cope with present challenges, but also to plan for the future as well. We are made up of the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

In terms of production, this means we:

- add another 15,000 miles of Interstate Highways to 27,000 miles already built;
- provide air traffic control for 14,000 flights a day;
- adopt and enforce regulations to insure the safety of 150 million airline passengers;
- set standards of safety to be followed in the manufacture of about 10 million automotive vehicles;
- conduct some 45,000 maritime search and rescue missions;
- set standards of highway safety affecting 100 million vehicles on the road today;
- work with and assist the Nation's hundreds of mass transit systems and their 8 billion passengers.

But there is another dimension to the challenge. I mentioned urbanization and population growth. Well, the demand for transportation is increasing at a faster rate. The number of vehicles on our highways increase by 10,000 a day. Every 24 hours, our domestic airlines add 40,000 passengers to their lists. And our railroads are increasing their freight operations by about five billion ton miles a year.

This fantastic growth is placing heavy strains on supporting facilities. And the strain is particularly severe in aviation. In certain busy areas, we have already exhausted the supply of airspace and airport capacity. To meet this emergency, President Nixon has proposed a new airport/airways bill. Our legislation proposes a number of user charges -- taxes -- on airline tickets, air freight waybills, and on the fuel used by general aviation aircraft. The funds derived from these taxes will be placed in a designated



account and used to establish the hundreds of new navigation aids that are needed -- to increase our air traffic control personnel -- and to expand and improve our airports. Unless these funds are realized, the continued growth of American aviation just might not come about.

At the same time, we are working hard to upgrade ground transport, particularly in the cities. Our urban mass transit systems are deteriorating. In recent years, 235 public transportation companies have gone out of business. Here, again, President Nixon has moved in. We have asked the Congress to approve a new Public Transportation Bill that will provide \$10 billion over a 12-year period. These funds will be used to expand and improve the public transit systems of our large metropolitan areas as well as in the small cities. This, again, is most urgent legislation.

We cannot be content, however, with merely meeting today's demands. The introduction of any new transportation innovation requires a lengthy lead time. We are, consequently, looking far into tomorrow. And we find these last decades of the 20th century will be spectacular -- with tremendous advances in science -- an ever increasingly rapid growth of our economy with its consequent raising of our standard of living -- and an almost explosive development of new technologies. This world of tomorrow will require a vast international exchange of persons, productive goods, and knowledge. It will demand mass, high-speed travel, and at long distances, by professional men, students, businessmen, tourists -- across continents -- and between all points of the globe. In sum, we are on the threshold of an era of mass intercontinental transportation.

To insure that the United States will participate in the progress of that era, and will grow with it, we have proposed to the Congress that we proceed with the development of our Supersonic Transport.

This American SST will be an exciting plane. Everything about it is unusual. Its size -- as long as a football field. Its speed -- 1800 miles per hour. Some people say that's too fast. They want to know if it's really necessary. I'd like to put that in perspective right now.

The fact is, right at this very moment, every person and everything in this room is traveling eastward at about 700 miles per hour.

Also, at this very moment, every person and everything in this room is roaring around the sun through space at a speed of 66,000 miles per hour.

And my words -- they're coming to you at 760 miles per hour and the light here is traveling at 186,000 miles per second. So all we're trying to do is just build an airplane that will assist man in moving a little more in harmony with his environment.

I think, as a matter of fact, one of the early problems we shall have with our Supersonic Transport is disbelief. Few people will be aware or



appreciate that this airplane will be traveling at such a high rate of speed. When it reaches its cruising speed of 1800 miles an hour, it will be in an altitude of 15 miles up -- out of sight. As far as the crew and passengers are concerned, they will have less sensation of speed than they have in the family car. The only thing the businessman of 1980 will know is that he'll get on the plane in New York, open up the Wall Street Journal, smile at yesterday's closing prices, read a couple of editorials, and have some coffee, tea or milk. But before he's had time to take a trans-Atlantic snooze, he'll be fastening his seat belt to let down in Milano.

Our government is assisting in developing the Supersonic Transport because we consider it a sound and prudent investment in America's future.

It will insure that our aviation industry will grow and prosper -- that it will continue to provide employment for hundreds of thousands of American workmen -- workmen scattered in all the 50 States. While Boeing will build the airframe and General Electric will build the engines, they will be using some 20,000 other firms as subcontractors or vendors.

At the same time, we want to maintain and expand trade with all countries. And we believe the Supersonic Transport is a product that will be in demand in foreign markets. At present, aircraft and aircraft parts are among America's leading export items.

We believe our SST's will take their place in this export trade, thereby helping us maintain a balance of trade. The revenues derived from these sales, consequently, will enable us to purchase needed import items from other nations. This is a most important consideration.

You men here today well know, however, there are far greater benefits from foreign trade than profits and balances of payments. You know from experiences during your working day that foreign trade also means new knowledge -- new friendships -- new understandings -- and new appreciations. You know that daily contacts between the nationals of any two nations mean a lessening of ignorance -- a lessening of suspicion -- a lessening of fear. You well know that you have opened many international trades as strangers -- only to later close them as friends. No one can place a true price on such an achievement.

We think our Supersonic Transport will be a major contributor to the growth of trade among all nations. We think this airplane will help bring the peoples of the world closer together. We think it will help contribute a little to better human understanding -- we think it will help people to know each other. All this -- in the crowded, busy and dangerous world of tomorrow -- will be a major prize.

Let me also add this, in all candor. The public works projects that we know will be necessary as we keep up with the American pace of growth will -- in and of themselves -- pose problems.



Highways can, on occasion, cut neighborhoods in half and contribute to civic unrest and dissatisfaction. Rapid transit terminal yards, bus garages and other maintenance facilities don't really belong in residential areas, even if that's where the end of the line is.

Modern airports -- some of them as large as 25 to 30-thousand acres -- can create serious noise problems and have other adverse side effects. Waterways can become polluted. Air pollution is a serious problem, with 75-percent of the noxious effluents in our atmosphere originating with internal combustion engines.

This Administration recognizes full well that what is done in the name of "progress" must be done with full consideration for human and natural tranquility. That is why, for instance, we have directed that the American SST will fly at supersonic speeds only over unpopulated areas.

That is why, for instance, we withdrew Federal support from a proposed highway in New Orleans that would have effectively wiped out the historic French Quarter. That is why, for instance, we have been extremely hesitant to go ahead with approval for the development of a new jetport for Miami, Florida, that threatens the very existence of the Everglades National Park.

The new Administration in Washington is determined that our environment, both urban and rural, will be protected. The President established, just ten days after taking office, the Urban Affairs Council. He has also set up the Environmental Quality Council. I am privileged to be a member of each of these groups. In our own Department, we have an Assistant Secretary for Environment and Urban Systems -- and area that was never covered at the Assistant Secretary level in the past.

So while we have monumental challenges ahead of us, we are also gearing up quickly to cope with those challenges.

I think it is safe to report to you today, here in Milan, that back home we have an Administration that is determined to be a "can do" Administration, one that will get the job done in every area of responsibility that needs attention.

I am confident that we are entering an era of great progress, and that the years immediately ahead will bear the fruits of that progress.

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