



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, JOHN A. VOLPE, AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION, SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 1970, 2:30 P. M., MIAMI BEACH AUDITORIUM, MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

The automobile -- and its industry -- have contributed tremendously to our way of life. I don't have to list for this audience the great progress that has come to this nation because of the new mobility that has been the hallmark of the twentieth century.

Better personal transportation has brought us a better standard of living, and a better understanding of our fellow man.

But I must point out also that these improvements have not been without cost. Far too often we have paid a stiff price for progress.

The sheer magnitude of our challenge in reducing highway accidents is breathtaking. We are dealing with well over 100-million vehicles that are increasing at the rate of 12-thousand a day.

Accidents involving these vehicles killed over 55-thousand of our citizens last year. That means over 150 a day. They injure

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another 10-thousand every day. In economic terms, these accidents represent a loss of 40-million dollars every day.

We in the Department of Transportation are working on this problem. We are helping to build safer highways. The accident rate on our interstate system is superior to non-interstate roads. In terms of statistics, for each 5 miles of interstate highway, we are saving one life a year -- every year.

More directly, we are working with the states to eliminate danger points on highways already built. We are providing funds to eliminate bad curves, dangerous intersections, and other highway hazards that have contributed to highway accidents.

Our National Highway Safety Bureau has set some 16 safety standards to be followed. They cover periodic inspections, driver education, alcohol, motorcycle safety, and 12 other areas. We provide financial assistance to those states which adopt these standards. And we have the right to impose financial penalties on those states whose safety programs don't measure up.

And we set safety standards to be followed in the manufacture of automobiles and tires.

All these programs are working. They are saving lives. We have statistical proof that our drive for improving crash survivability is showing results. But I am not satisfied with these efforts.

I would like to see more innovation and imagination in highway safety. I am impressed by the ingenuity of the new air bag safety device and by the energy-absorption bumper. These both show great promise. We are hoping that research will be completed on the air bag so that it may be possible to make them mandatory for the 1972 or 1973 model cars.

We are also issuing research contracts for study on impact attenuation devices such as the plastic hinge, energy absorbing bumpers, and front ends.

Let me emphasize, however, whatever Government does -- whether Federal, state, or local -- it will not be enough. And this is where we need your help.

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You members of the National Automobile Dealers Association have special qualifications. You are, first of all, professionals in the automobile industry. You know cars and driving far better than most. You are at the same time, top "crackerjack" salesmen. You are also leaders in your local communities. Through your advertising -- and through your community activities -- you are well known and respected. You are finally, the all important link between the manufacturer and the consumer.

I ask now that you put these invaluable assets to work to improve highway safety. I do not have to list specific actions. The auto industries Highway Safety Committee, which your Association sponsors, has suggested a number of actions and programs individual dealers can activate and support. I ask rather that highway safety take on a new importance in your thinking -- that concern for highway safety becomes your second nature.

And here I am not asking anything radical. Your own Association is an ardent champion of this cause. The auto manufacturers are increasingly concerned with it. The widely respected Executive Vice President of the Ford Motor Company, Lee Iacocca, said it best. "It's time to sell -- really sell -- not just the idea of highway safety, but also the hard, specific actions which produce highway safety. And an important part of our safety program is selling."

And here's another quote. It reads: "Automobile manufacturers must continue to work out positive ways in which the built-in protection for the car occupant can be improved. Public officials at every level must provide the means, through improved laws, regulation, and enforcement." The man who said that is Jim Roche, Chairman of the Board at General Motors.

This safety effort is in the automobile industry's own best interest. Safety is imposed by regulation from the top. The degree of this imposition rests, however, on the amount of safety achieved voluntarily by industry and by the public. This grass roots effort is not only necessary. It is the best approach. A thoroughly highway-safety-conscious public will provide more safety "clout" than any other single weapon.

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The most direct way you auto dealers can serve in this education of the public is by making available to everybody who comes into your showroom the new safety information that comes with each new car. This information includes performance data in three subjects: acceleration and passing; tire reserve load; and stopping distance. You can cooperate with us by having this information prominently displayed. This will start the safety thinking process and it can help you sell cars.

What I have so far requested is required by law. You can do more than is required, however, and serve your industry and your community.

We are issuing this week a new book. The title is "Performance Data for New Passenger Cars and Motorcycles". Here it is... this book includes the safety information for each new car model. It will assist the consumer to compare safety performances of the new car. It will assist him in making an informed choice.

I urge each of you to get a copy of this book and make it available to your customers.

I also urge you as responsible leaders in your communities to do what you can in putting the spotlight on the alcoholic driver. The heavy drinker at the wheel of an automobile is a danger not only to himself, but to others. Alcohol is a factor in half of our auto fatalities.

One other important matter. Whatever and wherever its origin, occasional inflammatory advertising of the high performance "muscle" cars is contributing to auto accidents. Catering to -- and encouraging the instinct to speed -- particularly among the young -- contributes to unsafe driving. Automobile accidents are the leading cause of death among our young people from 16 to 25. It's a tragic statistic.

What I want to discuss now relates directly to your success in business, and relates directly to the future of the cities of America.

The costs of traffic congestion are incredible. The New York Trucking Association found that the average truck operating in mid-town Manhattan lost four hours in earning time daily. Total cost of the loss every year for these trucks -- 150-million dollars. A consulting

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firm estimated that Baltimore drivers were paying a cost of 152-thousand dollars a day incurred by stopping at signal lights and the subsequent delays because of heavy traffic. The Citizens Traffic Safety Board of New York City says auto fuel consumption in the city is 30 percent higher because of traffic congestion. Downtown congestion is increasing the cost of doing business.

Public transportation is in difficulty. In recent years, some 235 transit companies have gone out of business. And most public transit is being stifled by the cycle of increased operating costs necessitating higher fares which results in a decrease of passengers.

To meet this crisis, President Nixon has asked Congress to approve a 10-billion dollar, 12-year public transportation bill. This will have an immediate obligation of 3.1 billion dollars available for the first five years of the program. This money will 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.

I ask for your help and assistance in securing passage of this vital legislation. This bill is -- in a sense -- the public transportation equivalent of the Federal Highway Act of 1956 which launched the interstate system.

It has already been reported out by the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, and hearings are scheduled in the House starting in less than two weeks. We expect early Senate action on the bill. And we are hopeful that the House will follow suit. We believe that a Public Transportation Act must and will pass Congress this session.

It is vital to our cities and towns. It is also vital -- in the long run -- to the auto industry.

There is one side of this public transit bill that bears special mention. This is its promise to eventually help reduce air pollution.

I want to emphasize at the outset of this discussion of ecology that I am not singling out the auto industry. Indeed, no American can single

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out any of his neighbors for special blame. We are all guilty. We are all contributing. There's a line in Walt Kelley's comic strip which, I suggest, states the pollution problem. As Pogo says, "We have met the enemy and they are us." Pollution is us -- all of us.

The destruction of our environment can be shown in many ways -- in the signs that say, "Unsafe for Swimming" appearing at some of our lake fronts or on river sides -- in the fact that noise in our cities is increasing at an average rate of a decibel a year -- or that a cloverleaf interchange between two major highways takes up 40 acres of ground -- that our automobiles are spewing out nearly a half ton of pollutants for every man, woman, and child in the country -- that the smog blanket that covers our large cities can be read on the instruments of an airplane flying through it.

I need not go on. We all know too well this sorry story. The point is President Nixon is determined to reverse this trend. He is formulating a major program to end pollution and to preserve our ecology. I urge you to back this plan in your communities. Here, again, the action by the Federal Government -- by itself -- cannot do the job.

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