



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WORCESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS, TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1970

Our greatest aviation challenge is the explosive growth of the aviation industry. Airline passenger miles have doubled in the last 4 years and are expected to triple in the next decade.

General aviation -- non-airline aircraft -- have, at the same time been increasing their flying time by about 4-thousand hours a day. This is a phenomenal growth. It is good growth, too. It is an indication of solid economic progress. Yet at the same time, we face problems with the supporting systems -- airfields, traffic control facilities and navigational aids.

Everywhere we are short. Right now we need 9-hundred new airports, and we need improvements at over 27-hundred existing airports.

I am -- of course -- well aware of the Worcester Chamber's efforts regarding a new regional jetport to take some of the pressure off Boston, and even New York.

And I want to congratulate you for your interest. This is the kind of community support that makes a city and a region grow and develop.

But airports are not our only shortage. We shall need to spend on the operation, maintenance and expansion of airways systems 12-billion dollars over the next ten years. That averages out about 3-million dollars per day.

To meet these needs, the President has sent to the Congress our Airport/Airways legislation which proposes new user charges to be paid by those who benefit directly from the services provided. The funds from these charges will be used to help pay the tremendous costs of operating, maintaining and expanding the supporting facilities needed by our flying public.

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The Bill passed the House by the astonishing vote of 337 to 6. Hearings are completed on the Senate side and we are hopeful of final action in time to put the Bill on the President's desk as a Valentine's Day present. Passage of this legislation will do much to solve the near-crisis that has developed in our air system.

We have similar problems in land transportation. You, of course, are all aware of the tremendous job done by our Federal Highway Administration, particularly with the beginning of the Interstate Highway Program in 1956 which I was privileged to initiate for President Eisenhower.

Our highways have brought great progress, both economic, industrial and by way of safety on our highways. As a matter of fact, we know that for every five miles of interstate system that we build we save one human life -- not just for that year but for every succeeding year.

Your Worcester Expressway is, of course, perhaps our best advertisement for our interstate highway system. I remember how many meetings I came to here in Worcester to resolve the location of the expressway as well as other highway improvements and I remember being pushed rather hard as Governor for commitment as to when the Worcester Expressway would be fully opened to the public. I remember well that I said that we would have the project substantially completed by the end of 1969.

I remember that day in November 1968 when we opened up the section from Brosnihan Square to Auburn, Frank McGrath stated publicly that despite earlier disagreement, the city now recognized that the D-P-W and the Bureau of Public Roads were right, and that the Worcester Expressway's present location is best for the City of Worcester.

I was delighted to hear that the 11-mile section down to I-495 was opened this month, and I think that high praise is certainly in order for Governor Sargent and Commissioner Ed Ribbs and the people at the D-P-W. And despite many setbacks, including the freezing of Federal funds, work stoppages, not to mention the inescapable adversity of a very wet November and the present unfavorable snows, we made it almost right on the nose. The actual completion date is June 15, and I think all hands deserve hearty congratulations.

On the national scene, in the past year we have opened to traffic 1,774 new miles of interstate highways. This brings our total interstate mileage to nearly 30,000 -- or about two-thirds of the whole system. And the interstate system -- I

might point out, will -- when completed -- amount to only one percent of our mileage but will carry 20 percent of our traffic.

Notwithstanding the tremendous progress that we have made, however, in highway construction, and without a doubt we will have to build more highways, the fact remains that this has been done without a parallel effort in developing our public transportation.

In our cities, public transportation is carrying about 10-billion passengers a year. It is the life blood of our urban areas. Yet public transportation is in difficulty. In recent years, some 235 transit companies have gone out of business. And there has been very substantial reduction in the number of passengers using public transportation from about 25-billion passengers per year to less than 10-billion passengers per year. Many transit companies, consequently, are in serious financial difficulty. Many are victims of the same cycle -- increased costs require increases in fares which, in turn, results in lower patronage. Yet, my friends, public transit is a vital necessity.

Our cities -- and I'm talking here of even small cities in the 50,000 population bracket -- cannot depend on the automobile alone. The private automobile has tremendous shortcomings in urban areas -- all serious, but some more serious than others.

Never mind the fact that an automobile is some 20-feet long, weighs 2 tons, and carries, on the average, 1.6 people on each trip. Never mind the fact that the internal combustion engine (depending on whether you listen to its fans or its critics) generates from 50 to 80 percent of all the air pollution we breathe every day. Never mind the fact that the automobile kills 55,000 people every year, over 150 every day.

Never mind the fact that the leading cause of death among our young people, aged 16 to 25, is the highway crash. Never mind the fact that in America today we have one linear mile of highway for every square mile of land, and with the automobile population growing by 10,000 vehicles every 24 hours the demand for additional pavement is enormous.

Over and above all these items, we must accept the fact that there are those in our economy for whom the automobile is far too expensive a purchase.

We must accept the fact that all our proposed social remedies, such as model cities projects, health centers, evening college classes, job training centers, suburban employment

opportunities, and you-name-it, just aren't going to get full utilization if we make automobile ownership an unwritten prerequisite for participation.

Because of these factors, we attach great importance to public transportation. I recommended to the President and the President proposed to the Congress last August bold new legislation in this field.

Our Bill proposes a long-term, \$10-billion program to provide funds on an assured basis for the construction, expansion and improvement of public transportation in a growing America.

It is not just a big city Bill, designed to build subways and rapid transit systems. It will provide for sharply upgraded bus transportation, will enable the use of exclusive busways on urban freeways, and will provide for such things as "maxi-cabs," buses that provide door-to-door service in response to programmed demands. And it provides, too, for such things as new turbine buses, which practically eliminate the sort of air pollution we get today from conventional buses, as well as being far quieter.

Passage of this legislation can directly benefit the City of Worcester, and will tie-in efficiently with the massive urban redevelopment projects you have underway for a revitalized center city.

I hope that each of you will see fit to help us on this Bill, and pass along the "good word" to our Congressional Delegation to get this vital legislation passed.

Our other land transportation interests are covered by our Federal Railroad Administration -- the sponsor of the new high speed Metroliners between Washington and New York and the Turbotrain between New York and Boston.

We are convinced at the Department that there is a definite necessity to continue a basic minimum national rail passenger service, and this Administration is hard at work -- right now -- drawing up legislation that will provide continued service over medium-haul distances in and between densely populated areas of the country.

At sea, our Department is represented by the men of our great United States Coast Guard. Their mission is far greater than ever -- Marine sciences, oil pollution, boating safety, inspection of merchant vessels, and coastal support for our ground forces in Vietnam, to mention just a few.

Our other Maritime interest is the United States side of the Saint Lawrence Seaway -- America's fourth seacoast which

is making the great cities of the Midwest truly international ports.

The great thrust of our Department, however, is toward the future; research and development -- the new -- the different, the daring. We helped in opening up the Northwest Passage through the Arctic for supertankers to the north slope of Alaska.

We are sponsoring research on tracked air cushioned vehicles that will travel at high speeds on a cushion of air over a single track -- Gravitrains that will travel in vacuum tubes underground -- linear induction motors -- the supersonic transport. We are developing new ways to make public transit more attractive. Every method of transportation is being scrutinized and examined for improvement.

We are looking for speedier and more efficient transportation, certainly, but we now have two equally urgent additional purposes. The first is safety. And safety on our Nation's highways comes immediately to mind.

The repetition of the number of highway fatalities may have dulled our senses. Let me tell the facts another way ... 10,000 accidents per day ... 10,000 persons injured everyday ... total economic loss ... \$40-million every day. This must stop. And I intend to stop it.

I have brought into the Department of Transportation the best highway safety expert there is. He is Doug Toms, from the State of Washington. He is a recognized safety expert, well known and respected. I have put him on my staff reporting directly to me. And he and I are moving.

I am ordering here and now, tonight, that our program to build an experimental safety car begin. This car will be a mobile crash laboratory. The car we are planning must be safe in any type of crash up to 50 miles an hour. It must be able to crash into a concrete barrier at 50 miles an hour with no injury to the occupants. It must be capable of rolling over at 70 miles per hour with the passenger compartment still intact. It will offer new handling and braking capabilities superior to anything on the market today. It will provide improved visibility for the driver and it will be powered by an engine which can effectively use low pollution fuels.

Our plan is to have 14 of these cars built and tested by the end of 1972. It is our intention that the auto industry will seize on the new safety improvements we develop and will incorporate them in production models. These cars will also provide us data to be used in setting future standards of safety for the manufacture of production automobiles.

Today, in Washington, we have asked for proposals to develop design and construct a family sedan. We shall let two contracts for prototype development. Later we shall select the best car of these two and order an additional 12 models.

This is a beginning. Our plans call for us to build additional safety cars in models other than sedans, and be capable of withstanding crashes at greater speeds.

This is an integrated systems approach to highway safety, and I am confident that it will result in a substantial decrease in highway fatalities.

While the knowledge and the benefits of this program may be a few years coming, there are more immediate steps that we can and are taking. One is the airbag restraint system, which automatically cushions the occupant at the instant of a crash. We are aiming at having this ready for 1973 models. Another project is the so-called "plastic hinge" flexible bumper which also is nearing the stage where it can be added to present cars and take the "crunch out of the crash", for the benefit of those inside the vehicle.

Safety, then is a priority consideration. Another is the preservation and protection of our environment.

President Nixon stated the case most eloquently in his State of the Union message last week. He said, "clean air, clean water, open spaces, these should once again be the birthright of every American." For my part, I am determined to support this cause to the fullest.

The toll of environmental destruction is horrifying - - yellow blankets of smog over most of our major cities - - smog so thick it shows up on aircraft radar screens -- rivers and streams so dangerously polluted that out in Cleveland, the Cuyahoga River was so oily it caught fire!

We are going to change this. And I know the good people of Massachusetts will be solidly with us. This, our State, is a miracle of nature's beauty. We shall defend it. Frank Sargent made this perfectly clear in his annual message.

And I don't mind saying that I am proud of the Inland Wetlands Bill and the Coastal Wetlands Bill, both of which I had the privilege of signing into law when I was Governor. Not to mention the \$150 million water pollution measure we enacted a few years ago.

But even measures such as those are not enough. The Massachusetts spirit of conservation must become a national spirit, because drifting smog, oily rivers, noisy jet aircraft,

and smoking internal combustion engines are no respectors of state lines. The President knows this, and this Administration is determined to get results, national results.

It was my privilege to be sitting directly in front of the President when he delivered his great State of the Union message last Thursday and I was very much impressed. He has the correct and best course in Vietnam. He is bringing an end to that war, honorably and sensibly.

His battle against inflation is courageous and he is winning. Friends, he is waging this battle on behalf of you and me and the 200 million other Americans. We must help him.

I could sense from that speech his great vision for this country in the decade to come. He foresees the peace and plenty that can be ours. I hope we all share that vision. There is nothing we cannot achieve. The opportunities of the future are the greatest ever. You people here, in this city, should have special dreams of the future, for this is the home of Dr. Robert Goddard, father of American rocketry. You have been fortunate in seeing all his great dreams fulfilled. But this is only a start. There is a passage in the book, The Promise of Space by Arthur C. Clarke which I should like to read to you. It has an awesome sense of the infinity of opportunities that can be ours in the future. He writes:

"Every age has its dreams, its symbols of romance. Past generations were moved by the graceful power of the great windjammers, by the distant whistle of locomotives pounding through the night, by the caravans leaving on the golden road to Samarkand, . . . our grandchildren will likewise have their inspiration -- up among the stars.

"Our grandchildren will be able to look at the night sky and they will know that some nuclear-powered mariner has set forth once more, on the ocean whose farther shore he can never reach."

And so, my friends, the only limit for us are the limits of our vision. Let us not dream little dreams for we are moving into a most exciting decade. I recall a Cabinet meeting just before Christmas. My colleagues and I presented reports to the President on the first year of the new Administration. Toward the end of the meeting, the President turned his attention to the future and as he spoke of the coming decade of the Seventies his voice lowered as though he spoke in prayer. There was in his voice deep faith and hope and charity for all mankind.

He reminded us all that although he was impressed with the material progress made during the year, and even though we foresee great technological advances such as 1,000 mile-an-hour

aircraft, education for all of our young people, the elimination of poverty, he knew that more must be accomplished.

He felt that technological progress would be meaningless unless America and its citizens captured something else --

- - an ability to live with faith in God
- - an ability for man to live at peace with his environment
- - an ability for man to live at peace with all his neighbors throughout the world.

These are our goals for the next decade. I know we can reach them for I know we shall be seeing a spiritual rebirth in America. I thank God for this America, for even with its faults, there is among our people a tremendous reservoir of great faith. We must bring that faith forward. We must make its presence felt.

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