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STATEMENT OF JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE ENVIRONMENT, SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE, REGARDING THE PROPOSED FEDERAL LOW-EMISSION VEHICLE PROCUREMENT ACT (S. 3072), THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 1970

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the proposed Federal Low-Emission Vehicle Procurement Act (S. 3072).

Air pollution is one of the most serious problems facing America today, and the automobile is its principal cause. We are particularly concerned about this in the Department of Transportation, and we recognize fully the need to attack the problem on the broadest possible basis.

As a Nation, we have taken justifiable pride in our pursuit of an ever-improving standard of living, holding out to our children the hope and promise of a better life. However, we now find that the automobile--which has been a major factor in raising our standard of living--has also become a major public health problem through its contribution to air pollution. Air pollution has become, literally, a black mark on our Nation. It could threaten our very existence.

The statistics on our national output of air pollution give us some indication of the magnitude of the problem. In 1966, about 190 million tons of pollutants were dumped into the air. Motor vehicles contributed about 90 million tons to the total. No other single source of air pollution approaches this magnitude. In our largest cities, the motor vehicle is a particularly heavy contributor to the pollution problem.

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Air pollution affects us in many ways. It strikes at people, property, and even plant life. It is a national burden from the standpoint of health, economics, and aesthetics. Because the automobile is by far the greatest contributor to air pollution, the outlook is particularly depressing when one considers that vehicular traffic will double in 15 years if the present growth rate continues.

Our choice is clear. We must solve the pollution problem or stop the growth. This is the message which I intend to handcarry to Detroit on the 12th and 13th of February. At that time, I hope to explore the problem in depth with each of the major automobile manufacturers.

The principal effort of the Federal Government thus far in attempting to control air pollution from vehicles has been the establishment of emission standards respecting the output by internal combustion engines of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. This effort has brought about some appreciable reductions on a per vehicle basis, but more needs to be done because of the continuing growth in the number of engines in use. There remains some doubt whether, over the long run, improvements in the internal combustion engine can be an adequate solution to the auto pollution problem. There is a body of technical opinion holding that, in the face of increasing auto use, it will be necessary to develop an entirely new propulsion system.

The Department is attempting to reduce air pollution from both public and private vehicles. In December, two new types of buses designed to reduce pollution were demonstrated. One was equipped with the new

General Motors low-pollution device, sometimes referred to as the "environmental improvement kit." The other was an experimental turbine bus.

Two bus projects are now scheduled to begin. Diesel-powered buses equipped with the environmental improvement kit will go into service in San Francisco and here in Washington to test their performance under normal operating conditions. We will make available nearly \$250,000 for these projects. We expect to provide the State of California an additional amount, about \$550,000, to conduct another test program involving steam buses.

I intend to use our Urban Mass Transportation Program as a major element in the fight against pollution. In every project for financial assistance to States and local public bodies for the improvement of equipment for use in mass transportation in urban areas, we intend to take full advantage of the opportunity and obligation to assure that the equipment will be designed and used to minimize air pollution. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is, of course, responsible for the establishment of standards for motor vehicle emissions. That Department has the expertise for determining the impact of pollution on our health and well-being, and we look to them for leadership.

Turning to S. 3072, the bill before the Committee today, I would like to make only one or two points at this time. The bill would allow the Federal Government to pay a premium to procure low-emission vehicles as an incentive for the production of low-pollution engines. While there would, of course, be a question as to whether such a proposal

would provide sufficient incentive for the accomplishment of the necessary research and development, it is an interesting approach to the pollution problem, and is deserving of close attention.

In his State of the Union Message, the President stressed the need to intensify research in engine design and to establish increasingly strict standards to alleviate the automobile pollution problem. Very shortly, he will submit to the Congress his program for pollution control. I would urge that the Committee delay its consideration of S. 3072 until it has had an opportunity to examine the President's program.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.