



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE 68TH ANNUAL AMERICAN ROAD BUILDERS ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, MONDAY, MARCH 2, 1970, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

It is an honor for me to be associated with men who have done so much to bring the world closer together.

And yet I am sure there is no one here today who does not agree that the roadbuilder -- who has done so much through history -- now has a different, an expanded, role to play.

The theme of your convention here this week -- "The Challenge of Change" -- is very exciting. That our world is changing -- this fact needs no amplification. But that we individuals are altering our approach and our methods to accommodate these changes -- this perhaps is a matter that deserves critical inspection.

Let me look ahead with you today to some of our forthcoming transportation problems and examine them.

Wherever we look in the future the dominant theme is need -- need for more -- need for the better. Transportation is no exception. It does in fact surpass other fields in its demands on the future. This future need is easily understood because everything in our Twentieth Century American civilization is based on mobility.

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We have been able to meet these demands in the past by invention -- particularly the invention of the automobile and our dominant mode today is still the automotive vehicle. We support this vehicle with a fine and extensive highway system. Thanks largely to you gentlemen here today, our Nation can claim the finest highway network in the world.

And let me point out -- emphatically -- that we are going to need more highways. The facts are indisputable. Within the country's 233 urban areas of more than 50,000 population -- 99 percent of all trips are by highway vehicle. In intercity travel, the figure is almost as high. We estimate intercity travel totals over one trillion person-miles every year. Of this vast amount of travel, 88 percent is by highway.

The dollar figures are equally convincing. Our latest complete figures -- for 1967 -- show annual costs of highway transportation to be 128-billion dollars. This represents 82 percent of the total of all transportation costs -- or 4 times as much as all the other modes put together.

Yes, my friend, highways are here to stay.

But highways alone will never solve all of our future transportation challenges. The size of this total challenge is fantastic. In the next ten years while the volume of automobile traffic will be increasing by over 50 percent, air passenger miles will triple. Railroad ton-miles will go up 25 percent and trucks will be carrying 50 percent more than they do today. Put in simple, basic terms, we shall have to double America's transportation capability within the next two decades.

And we must do this in conformity with a changing America -- an America that is rapidly turning to the cities. Five years from now 75 percent of our people will live in metropolitan areas -- in other words on 2 percent of the land. Let's narrow it down even more. About half of America will be living in three highly concentrated and continuous urban zones -- one extending the full length of the California coast, another along the Chicago-Detroit-Cleveland axis and the third, of course, is the Northeast megalopolis stretching from Richmond, Virginia to Portland, Maine.

That is the physical framework of our challenge.

I also want to note that we are beginning our contest with the future under a handicap. We are a little late getting away from the gate. At the present time, we are not even meeting today's demands. Our highways are congested. In the all important field of public transportation, we find our buses crowded and tied up in traffic. Our railroads suffer from freight car shortages and long delayed deliveries; and railroad passenger service is minimal. Our modern jet airplanes can fly freight across the Atlantic in 6 hours. Yet the actual portal to portal shipment may take six days because of red tape and paperwork. And here at home we are short some 900 airports.

I remind you, too, that we must not only expand and build, but we must do it in conformity to two very rigid guidelines.

The first is that concern for safety be paramount. We must reduce the toll of transportation accidents. On our highways last year, more than 56,000

persons were killed -- the highest highway death toll ever. this is unacceptable. I ask you to be mindful of safety in your highway design. I point out that you road builders save one life -- every year -- for every five miles of highway built to interstate standards. This effort must be continued -- indeed, it must be improved upon.

Our second concern is that this expansion of transportation must be carried out with complete dedication to the task of protecting and preserving our environment. I do not minimize the enormity of our assignment. President Nixon put it in true perspective when he said in his State of the Union Message: "The environmental problems we face are deep rooted and widespread. They can be solved only by a full national effort embracing not only sound, coordinated planning, but, also an effective follow-through that reaches into every community in the land. Improving our surroundings is necessarily the business of us all."

We in the Department of Transportation have already begun to move on this challenge of expanding our transportation system -- and, in keeping with our safety and environmental guidelines. Two of our Bills are designed to ease immediate critical problems. I am happy that the Board of Directors of your Association supports both these Bills.

The first is the Airport-Airways Bill which just last Thursday night was approved by the Senate -- by the unanimous vote of 77 to 0! I had earlier been approved by the House of Representatives by the lopsided majority of 337 to 6. Differences between the Senate and House Bills are now being ironed out in Conference Committee. This Bill will create a fund of more than \$15 billion to expand and improve the Nation's airports and our air traffic and air navigation systems. Of direct interest to you men here today is the fact that it will mean over the next ten years thousands and thousands of feet of new or improved runways at airports across the Nation.

We are beginning to move!

Our Public Transportation Bill of 1970 will provide direct and immediate assistance to the Nation's ailing urban transit industry. In this era of migration to urban centers, the public transportation systems of our Nation's cities are finding the going rough. The number of passengers is declining, costs are increasing, profits are shrinking, indeed, deficits are becoming routine. In recent years, some 235 transit companies have gone out of business. Our Bill will provide \$10 billion over a long-term period to help these transit systems survive and continue to serve.

In addition to the American Road Builders Association's official endorsement, I would solicit your individual support -- support which to be effective should be known by your Senators and Representatives in Washington.

But let me emphasize! All the Government programs alone cannot solve our transportation crisis. We are going to need support and contributions from state and local governments, from private industry and from dedicated individuals. Our task, in brief, is to take a close scrutiny of our transportation work in terms of a penalty/benefit analysis -- weighing the penalties and benefits to our total society. It was just such an analysis that prompted me last month to issue a new ruling that from now on Federal funds will be allocated for

transportation facilities only if replacement housing is provided for and built before condemnation and demolition take place. If a family is going to be evicted to make way for a new Federal-aid project, there must be available comparable housing to accommodate that family. Otherwise, no construction. This is fair, it is honest, it is decent, it is right.

This is the kind of consideration you must apply to your own work.

This housing program will require the assistance of state and local officials for its enforcement. I spoke on it at the Governor's Conference in Washington last week and I asked for their cooperation. I believe I shall have it.

Many of our problems, henceforth, will require renewed close Federal-State cooperation. We know from past experience that such cooperation will work for the betterment of both the state and the Federal governments. President Nixon has inaugurated a new approach to place greater responsibility for decision-making with the states and to provide them the resources to back up these decisions. I believe it is a wise and necessary move and will help us in our efforts to provide a balanced transportation system.

You are realizing by this time that I am asking you to be more than road builders. I am asking you to be conscientious citizens -- keenly aware of how your professional activities affect our society. Yes -- there is challenge connected with change. The challenge can be seen too, in our new equal opportunity order. I am aware that ARBA's Board of Directors has advocated that the Federal-Aid Highway Program be exempted from the Civil Rights Compliance Program as set forth in our Department of Transportation Order 1000.

I preface my comments here by noting that our purpose has not changed. Full and equal employment opportunity in transportation construction is still our goal. We have, however, revised our order #1000 and in this revision we have taken your comments into consideration.

Under the new revision, the total equal opportunity obligations of each contractor doing business with the Department -- or each contractor doing business with those who receive our funds -- will find his total equal opportunity obligations incorporated in the bid specifications. The total equal opportunity package will be presented in such detail that there will be no question about what the contractor is expected to do. This will resolve the formerly prevalent problem of uncertainty about just what would be expected of the contractor.

We need your cooperation to make this program successful. I ask that cooperation now. You will appreciate my concern when I tell you this effort is as important as anything we are doing in the country at this time. Again, it is a policy that is fair, honest, decent, and right. There is no room for compromise when it comes to assuring a man the opportunity to go to work -- to earn a living for his family -- to help all of us build a better, more decent, safer and peaceful Nation. Equal opportunity provisions are non-negotiable. They are backed-up by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, by America's traditional sense of fair play, and by every man's innate sense of propriety and justice.

With this in mind, I also ask your support for President Nixon's plan to assist minority enterprises. You can do this by insuring that minority contractors and subcontractors have a chance to bid on your jobs. You can invite these minority businessmen to become part of your professional organizations, and you can examine all ways in which the services of these minority businessmen can be utilized.

This is a major program of the President's and I ask your support. We owe President Nixon our solid support. For he is working for all of us. And he is succeeding. He is winding down the Vietnam War. He has a firm handle on inflation and he is bringing it under control. He has brought fiscal integrity back to the Government. (I know -- you should see what he did to my budget!) And he has brought about tremendous reform in many of our domestic programs. And now he has undertaken a major campaign to reverse the destruction of our natural resources and restore our environment to its original richness. All this represents a vast undertaking and it is going to require the best from each of us.

Our own field of transportation is no less challenging. I have outlined some of our requirements, and I can understand if maybe some of you are skeptical. But, gentlemen, we must meet our obligations and shall meet them.

What I ask involves risks. I not only ask you to take risks, I challenge you to go out and seek those risks. If there is no risk, there is no progress. Without uncertainty -- without the possibility of victory or defeat -- we stand still - and to stand still in an era of progress is to go backwards. I ask that you be imaginative and daring and be willing to try the new and different. Must a freeway fulfill only one function? I am reminded that land in our downtown central business districts costs anywhere from \$100 to \$500 per square foot. Yet there are thousands and thousands of square feet of open space over our downtown freeways that are not being used. In far too many instances, we are letting these valuable air rights go to waste.

There are other areas where we should be looking closely at the new and the different. I am particularly interested in such new developments as the Electronic Route Guidance System -- which in effect puts a navigator in the seat beside the driver and allows us to make far more efficient use of the highways we already have. We must look to the use of express busways -- special lanes reserved for buses during rush hours to make those buses competitive with the private automobile. We must also find new and better ways of tunneling. A tunnel for automotive traffic may sound expensive in the short run, but a long-range view may show it to be the best investment ever.

Every highway project must be preceded by a searching question. "Is there a new or better way of doing it?"

This is the kind of imaginative approach I seek.

I ask finally that you be persistent. Nothing is harder than to initiate the new and the different. Persistence is the stuff of genius. One of this nation's most talented men, Thomas Edison, put it more bluntly. "Genius," he said, "is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." That's the sort of day-in/day-out persistence that we need.

I want to note that what I am asking here of you, I am asking of everybody in the transportation field. Indeed, I ask it of every group to whom I speak.

There may be doubters among you. I know it is easy to say: "The burden is too great. We can't do it." Gentlemen, I ask you to think for a moment of the power of America. As you return home from New York, look out the window and reflect for a moment on the factories and the fields of this land of ours -- and the good people working in them. There is the greatest power the world has ever known. Our technology and our industry is unsurpassed. The editors of Fortune Magazine have put this power in an interesting perspective. They estimate that if all the energy produced in the United States were converted into human productivity, each man, woman, and child in the United States would have 500 persons working for him. We cannot plead weakness.

Greater than our industry, however, is the strength of our spirit. Give us but the will and all things are possible. The determination of 200-million Americans directed to a common purpose cannot be stopped. And we need that determination now as never before.

The success of our moon landings gave all of us, at first, a new sense of importance. We thought we were pretty good -- pretty important. But there was an afterthought -- a second look -- and this was somewhat disturbing. Astronaut Frank Borman best described this new perspective. Speaking of his view as he circled the moon, he said, "when you can hold out your hand and cover the entire earth with your thumbnail, you realize we're all members of the same spaceship." And this spaceship, we now realize is finite and limited. It must be protected and respected. The question is, "Are we ready to do it?"

There is a quotation which is most apt. I ran across it the other day and wrote it down. It reads: "If it is to be, it is up to me ..." Can we here today -- all of us -- accept the massive challenge of those ten words? Or would we rather ignore it - turn away from its challenging obligation?

I'll say it again: "If it is to be, it is up to me." Think for a minute. Those words don't challenge you to go out and be top dog. They don't insist that you - and you alone -- can bring about the good things that must happen if this world is to survive. What those words mean is that if each of us -- every one of us -- accepts as his own the responsibility of worthwhile accomplishment, then nothing is beyond our grasp.

My friends, the last third of the 20th Century will be characterized by greater change than the world has ever seen. The pace is fast; it will get faster. The world is shrinking; it will get smaller. The crowds are large; they will get larger. The changes being thrust upon us, upon our children and our grandchildren, cannot be stopped. The challenge is here.

The road is wide; the opportunities are wider.

Never before in History has "challenge" been such a handmaiden to "change." It is up to each and every one of you -- it is up to all of us -- to accept the challenge and fight for it with our very lives.

We can change the world -- for the better.

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