(45)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

24-S-73

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR, TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY OFFICIALS, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 12, 1973.

It's a real pleasure to be here this morning. In selecting my home of Los Angeles for your convention city, you picked the metropolitan area in America most indebted to the highway for its growth and mobility, as well as the one that is now most in need of relief from that indebtedness. Your action yesterday in officially transforming AASHO from a highway association to a transportation organization points up your awareness of the changing priorities and your commitment to a shift of direction. I wish to offer my personal congratulations for your action and tell you how delighted I am to have a part in this first national meeting of state transportation officials.

Since my move to Washington last January, the urgency of the Penn Central and the other Northeast rail bankruptcies, along with the problems of the rail industry in general, have occupied much of my time. Yet for all the importance of the railroads to our economy, it's clearly the automobile and the highway that dominate our Nation's transportation system. Each of us--every man, woman and child in America--travels about 10,000 miles a year, requires the delivery of some 10,000 ton-miles of goods, and spends about a thousand dollars a year on transportation. If we multiply those figures by 210 million, we get a fair approximation of the size of our national transportation bill--something over $200 billion. And when we dig into the data a little farther, we find that 80 percent of what we spend for transportation involves highway transportation. When viewed in that perspective we begin to realize the full extent to which the motor vehicle dominates our lives and our lifestyles.

For nearly 60 years the American Association of State Highway Officials has held a position of leadership in supplying public highways in response to public demand. As the late highway commissioner Thomas H. MacDonald, whose memory your award for outstanding engineering achievement

now honors, once observed: "It was not our Nation's wealth that made our highways possible; rather, it was our highway system that contributed greatly to our country's wealth." Unquestionably, our highways have done wonders for America.

But now, 3.8 million miles of highways and 100-plus million automobiles later, we have come to a turning point. Clearly, our long-term concentration on cars and highways is no longer appropriate. The four big problems of urban congestion, pollution, safety, and now, perhaps the most important of them all--the energy shortage--demand a re-thinking of direction and a shift of emphasis. This certainly does not mean an abandonment of our fine state and Federal highway programs, and my comments should not be taken to mean I'm "anti-highway," for I'm not. I'm "pro-transportation," as you are, and our assignment now is to find how best to reach that broader goal.

Given any one of these four problems to contend with alone--congestion, pollution, safety, and energy--and permitted sufficient time, we might be able to manage a smooth transition from the old ways to the new ways. We have already made rewarding progress in controlling emissions, in constructing

safer highways, and in building greater passenger-protection into our cars. But the energy shortage has suddenly become a problem of an altogether different magnitude. Regrettably, we no longer have the luxury of planning and carrying out a leisurely transition. We must act now and act decisively. I'd like to discuss the energy situation in some detail, but first let me offer some perspective on the other three problems.

First, we have the problem of traffic congestion in urban areas. One doesn't have to come to Los Angeles to realize the motor car's popularity, but this is the place to come if one wants to see the supreme example of addiction to the automobile and the consequences of that addiction. The challenge confronting the people of Southern California is a king-size version of what threatens all our metropolitan regions.

These statistics tell the story:

-- More than 90 percent of all travel today is by highway.

-- Well over 80 percent of urban area home-to-work commuting is by car. Average occupancy nationwide

is under 1.5 persons per car; and in Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura Counties, it's only 1.1 per car.

-- Typical commuting speeds in our city centers are 10 to 15 miles per hour. In a recent contest in Washington bicyclists beat motorists to work over a half-dozen of the popular commuter routes.

-- Nearly two-thirds of the Nation's cars are in the urbanized areas of our country that collectively account for only 1 percent of the land. And while Federal and state highway programs have increased street and highway mileage in cities throughout the United States by more than 30 percent in the last 10 years alone, these increases have had little impact on reducing congestion. Between 1962 and 1972 the number of automobiles in America grew by 30 million. Last year our National affluence reached the point where the number of registered vehicles now slightly exceeds the number of licensed drivers.

The second factor forcing a re-thinking of priorities is our push for cleaner air. Under the terms of the Clean Air Act each state must develop plans to assure that their cities can reduce pollution to meet the prescribed air standards. According to the plans announced last month by the Environmental Protection Agency, 22 major metropolitan communities will have to take substantial--and, in some cases, extreme--action to achieve compliance with those standards. Los Angeles, for example, would have to virtually eliminate private vehicle travel in order to satisfy the clean air standards specified for 1977--certainly not a practical action but one that is indicative of the seriousness of the National goals.

I must note at this point that it's my personal view that some of the criteria specified in the legislation that the EPA must enforce are too strict and too inflexible. Revisions and flexibility are now especially appropriate because the energy shortage has altered the cost-benefit relationship. Nevertheless, while the realities of a short energy supply may require interim modifications and delays in meeting our environmental goals, I believe that over the

long-term we must continue to push toward the broad goals of the Clean Air Act.

To reach these long-term goals, and to keep from laying all the burden on the doorstep of the EPA, we must see more positive local actions. Ideas that originate solely in Washington can have painful consequences. The changes before us must come from joint thinking and joint actions. It involves the automobile industry by challenging the manufacturers to produce an environmentally-acceptable engine that also uses fuel sparingly. It requires unusual cooperation at Federal, state and local levels in developing, funding and implementing public transportation incentives. It necessitates the creation of local planning institutions empowered to take the lead in the structuring and coordination of transportation and land-use policies. The positive, joint-action approach also requires the re-allocation of some of the resources that are now going largely to highways.

I am greatly encouraged by the progress being made in each of these directions. The fact that 23 states now have departments of transportation shows the accelerating

trend toward broad gauge transportation planning and thinking. Your own action in revising the name and charter of your organization to embrace public transportation is a strong and welcome step. Another strong and welcome step forward came with the enactment of the 1973 Federal-Aid Highway Act.

Our department worked hard for a highway bill that would permit us to push forward on our Interstate and rural highway programs, but at the same time provide for flexibility and common sense in the use of the dollars assigned to our urban areas. The law signed by President Nixon on August 13 does that--it places the responsibility for transportation decision-making with state and local officials, where it properly belongs; and it gives those decision-makers immediate flexibility to choose the kinds of transportation best suited to their communities' needs. The legislation is complicated, and it will be dissected and thoroughly examined during your sessions this week. But the key point is that every urban transportation planner is now free to choose from an assortment of transportation options, and to do so immediately. The 1974 dollars were apportioned to the states early in September. The authority to initiate projects and to commit

dollars to those projects is now in state and local hands and, frankly, we are looking for proposals to approve. AASHO members can and, I'm certain, will make this system work.

You will find that the chain of command has changed a little under the 1973 amendments to Title 23, but only in the sense that either the Federal Highway Administration or the Urban Mass Transportation Administration will exercise Federal responsibility over transportation projects, depending on their nature. The delegations of authority for implementing the 1973 Act will appear this week in the Federal Register and will reflect that new chain of command. The legislation, however, is neither pro-highway nor pro-transit; it is transportation legislation and I intend to administer it as such. At present there are a number of FHWA and UMTA task forces at work, in consultation with AASHO, putting the appropriate regulations together. I've encouraged them to keep it simple, be stingy with the red tape, and to work out procedures that will make the regulations easily accessible to the public at large.

Next, I want to say just a few words about the third factor affecting our transportation future--highway safety.

The Federally-mandated safety improvements incorporated in new automobiles beginning in the 1960's are clearly having a favorable effect. Some 65 to 75 percent of all passenger car travel is now in vehicles equipped with safety belts, shatterproof windshields, energy-absorbing steering columns, and other protective devices. While other improvements can still be made, I believe that we have achieved most of the quick "big-ticket" items and that progress in this area from now on will be slower.

The highways constructed in recent years have also been significantly safer than they used to be. The 1973 Highway Act continues this accent on safety by authorizing a variety of construction and obstacle-elimination programs--programs we intend to carry forward as fully and as rapidly as we can prudently do so.

But of the three variables in the accident equation--the vehicle, the highway, and the driver--I think it is time for a renewed emphasis on the driver. Time and time again we find that driver error is the primary cause of the serious and fatal accidents. And since a sizable percentage of these are traceable to alcohol, we must persist in pushing the various alcohol countermeasure programs. We especially hope the states will take a larger role in identifying, restricting and rehabilitating the drunk driver. This is a proven "high pay-off" area in our efforts to reduce highway fatalities.

Another life-saver is the safety belt. At present, safety belts are available in 9 out of 10 passenger cars. Yet they are being used less than a quarter of the time. Despite this low usage, the belts that <u>are</u> being worn are

saving an estimated 3,000 lives a year. We believe a reasonably high percentage of usage would save 10,000 to 15,000 lives a year. No other single action could save so many lives so quickly and so inexpensively. This is why we are urging the states to enact safety belt use laws, requiring the wearing of lap and shoulder belts, and offering financial incentives to those who do. I hope that the members of your organization will join the many government agencies and private groups committed to the use of safety belts.

Finally, I'd like to discuss the fourth factor that we must face as we shift our priorities from the problems of the past to those of the future. Here, of course, I refer to the energy crisis.

Last Wednesday night President Nixon outlined the scope of the immediate energy crisis that faces our Nation. He also stressed the essential short-term and long-term steps that must be taken if we are to avoid serious disruptions to our living standards and our economic system.

Liquid petroleum provides almost half of the energy that makes our Nation move, our business prosper, keeps our houses bright and warm, and our living standards the highest

in the world. With only some 6% of the world's population we consume over 30% of the world's energy. We have become addicted to the availability of enormous amounts of low-cost energy. As a Nation we are energy "hogs."

Unfortunately, starting about three years ago oil from the Nation's oil fields began declining. New oil discoveries--except for Alaska's North Slope--have been disappointing. To offset these declines we have had to reach abroad for new sources--increasingly into the unstable Middle East where enormous oil reserves lay undeveloped. Of the Nation's total present oil usage of about 17½ million barrels a day, over 6 million--nearly 40%--now come from other countries. And of the 6 million, nearly half comes either directly or indirectly (for example, after processing in European refineries) by tanker from the Arab world.

Last Spring we were faced with a modest oil shortfall--say in the order of 3-5%. This resulted mainly from inadequate refinery and tanker shipping capacity. A 3-5% shortage can be managed by a few allocations and a few readjustments of oil usage. It was worrisome but not a crisis.

But suddenly the Middle East once again erupted into war. The Arab world, because of our direct support of Israel, has successfully embargoed all Arab-source oil imports into the U.S. In addition to shutting off direct crude oil shipments, they have shut off oil to refineries in The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and the Caribbean--refineries that were the source of sizable oil product shipments to U.S. markets, especially those on the East Coast. In total, we face an immediate shortage of at least 2 million barrels a day and possibly as much as 3 million barrels a day. Whereas we thought we were dealing with a 3-5% oil shortfall, we now must face a 15-20% oil shortage. No matter how you look at it, a 15-20% shortage is a crisis of major proportions.

The oil shortages for the next few months will be most critical in heating oils, diesel fuels, jet fuels, and the residual oils which are used to generate electricity. The Northeastern section of the U.S. will be most seriously affected. Shortly after the beginning of the year the shortage will hit gasoline and, if the Middle East embargo is not soon lifted, could cause a severe gasoline shortage

by early Spring. And even if the embargo is soon lifted, the present interruption will mean shortages for months ahead.

What do we do?

We do as we have done in other National crises. We use our heads and our ingenuity to manage as best we can. With care and cooperation we can squeeze the "slack" out of the system without major impacts on living styles or employment. Disruptions, yes--but not frozen homes or massive unemployment. But it will take much positive and quick action.

For the very short-term the Administration has outlined a several-step program, relying initially on voluntary restraints by the public coupled with directed energy savings on the part of Government, the airline industry, and other industries. This may soon be followed by gasoline rationing.

The President also asked the Nation's mayors and governors to implement energy-saving measures at the state and local levels. He specifically recommended a lowering of highway speed limits to 50 mph.

Those various reductions to be achieved within the Federal establishment, together with the voluntary restraints by citizens--especially in more prudent usage of their automobiles--could save about one million barrels of oil a day. Along with a 10 percent or so reduction in commercial airline flights, the conversion of some industries from oil to coal, and the increase in oil production that would come by opening of the Navy's Elk Hills reserves in California, savings could possibly reach two million barrels a day. Beyond that it gets very tough indeed.

In his message, President Nixon also asked for emergency legislation to meet the energy crisis more directly. His proposals included:

(1) An immediate return to daylight savings time on a year-around basis. This will save electricity and heating oil.

(2) A relaxation of environmental regulations on a temporary, selective basis. This will permit the use of alternate fuels, such as coal.

(3) Authority to impose special conservation measures, such as restrictions on commercial business operating hours.

(4) Federal authority to reduce highway speeds nationwide.

(5) Expansion of the Government's regulatory authority to adjust schedules of planes, ships and other carriers.

Looking beyond today's crisis and ahead to the Nation's long-range energy needs, President Nixon called for a major energy development program, patterned on such past high priority projects as the development of the atomic bomb and putting a man on the moon. Asking for a "united commitment to a major new endeavor" which he called "Project Independence," the President urged that we seek to "meet America's energy needs from America's own energy resources" by 1980. It will cost billions of dollars and, in my opinion, far overshadow any other peacetime program in importance and difficulty.

To direct this effort the President asked Congress to establish a new Federal agency--the Energy Research and

Development Administration. The major thrust of this program will be to step-up our nuclear power development and to develop methods of using the Nation's enormous coal deposits in place of scarce liquid and gaseous fuels. We will also look to break-throughs in the more exotic energy sources, such as oil shale, geothermal power, tidal power, and possibly even solar power.

In our own areas of interest--transportation--there is much to be done to use our energy resources more intelligently. Over 50% of all liquid petroleum ends up being used in transportation--mostly, of course, by our 100 million automobiles.

The Nation clearly can bring about a substantial savings in energy usage by revising its transportation habits. As the President indicated in his message, a greater use of mass transit and car-pooling can quickly produce sizable savings. Our analysis of the relative efficiencies of the private and public transportation modes shows that the average automobile delivers about 30 passenger miles per gallon, and often half that under conditions of urban congestion. A transit bus, on the other hand, can deliver

over 100 passenger miles per gallon of fuel. Thus, even a moderate shift from travel by car to travel by bus can produce significant oil savings.

Car pools offer enormous potential for energy conservation. If we could add just one more person to the average commuting motor vehicle, which now carries about 1.5 persons, we could save hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil each day.

Looking further ahead we must, of course, learn to build automobiles with fuel efficiencies such as we find in Europe and Japan. Our present performance levels must be pushed upward sharply. I believe a long-term target of 20 mpg is a reasonable National goal. To reach this we must have lighter cars and differently designed engines.

The President's proposals for dealing with the energy crisis deserve strong public support. The sentiment in Congress is favorable and bi-partisan, and I foresee a timely response to the legislation the President has requested. I believe the public will rally behind the President in this program to establish and live by a new ethic--the ethic of energy conservation. We all know that we Americans may not

always respond as quickly as we should to potential crises, but we also know that we can do wonders in catching up.

Finally, I should note that the timing of this energy crisis is, from a long-term viewpoint, perhaps fortunate. Based on recent trends, we could have expected to be using twice as much Arab oil in 3 or 4 years. But if an embargo came when our dependence had reached that level, we would, indeed have faced both a domestic and National security crisis of extreme proportions. Today, at least, we can cope and can learn how to avoid this future trap.

Your Association, with it broadened perspective and its wealth of knowledge and experience, can play an extremely important role in helping the Nation through this trying period. We're counting on you. We know you'll come through.

Thank you.

######