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DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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15-S-73

COMMENTS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR AT
DEDICATION OF DALLAS/FORT WORTH AIRPORT, SEPTEMBER 22, 1973.

Today's dedication of this magnificent airport is an important and welcome National event. What we see before us well typifies both the strength of America and the talents of Americans.

Your airport's very name--Dallas/Fort Worth--suggests strength. Here are two great cities that have put aside natural rivalries in recognition of a regional need that could only be met by joint action. Through cooperation you have produced an airport that now sets new world standards in concept and in execution. To the City of Dallas and to the City of Fort Worth--my congratulations on a job well done.

Many fine people have obviously dedicated years of personal effort to this airport. While the list of the deserving is too long to properly give individual recognition to all, the leadership of Chairman Erik Jonsson and Vice Chairman J. Lee Johnson must be singled out for special acknowledgment. Likewise, the accomplishments of Tom Sullivan, Executive Director, Jack Downey, Deputy Executive Director, and Ernest Dean, Deputy for Engineering, deserve recognition. Special recognition must also be given to the key coordinating role played by the leaders of the North Central Texas Council of Governments. And, of course, tribute is due to the business community--especially to those firms, including the airlines, that put themselves on the line in terms of financial commitments.

I suspect that these leaders, when they find time to pause for a reflective thought, may sometimes feel that this airport is more than steel, cement and other traditional building materials--that it, in fact, contains a share of their personal lives as well. To you people I say: It's a worthy investment. Be proud of it.

The Federal Government is also a proud partner. We are proud because we believe this airport properly reflects the kinds of Federal-local relationships envisioned by President Nixon's "New Federalism." We have encouraged cooperation, we have established guidelines, and we have provided financial help. A measure of the extent of our cooperation can be seen from the variety of sources of Federal funds: some have come from our airport development program, some from our urban mass transportation program, and even some from our highway program.

We expect to continue to help. But the leadership and the key decision-making must not come from Washington but from the local area. This is the proper way. You are the people with the local knowledge; you are the people who will benefit from the outcome; you are the people who should shape the future direction of your region's growth and development.

And shape it you have.

Never before has our Nation seen such a dedicated and thorough approach to airport and community planning.

Your central location between two major cities brings to both the benefits of an investment neither could individually support.

Your detailed long-range planning has provided a facility with the scope and flexibility to deal with today's demands, yet able to accommodate itself to the demands of a decade or two hence.

Your design concepts reflect equal concern for the needs of the air carrier, the traveler, and the cargo shipper.

Your consideration of environmental matters has overcome the noise and other airport-related problems that are increasingly plaguing so many of our metropolitan airports.

We at the Federal level can--and will--learn much from your careful approach to these issues. As we move ahead with plans for other airports in the National airport system we cannot help but be influenced by what you have already accomplished and by what you will learn from your future operations.

The reasons for the breadth of your plans are evident from your projections of air travel, cargo shipments, and regional development of allied industries. These projections

show a doubling of passenger enplanements and a three-fold growth in air cargo tonnage in less than 10 years.

Perhaps it's in order to pause for a moment to offer some words of caution as you reach for these goals.

First, be prepared for start-up stresses and strains. Be prepared--and be tolerant.

Second, real progress is measured, in the final analysis, not in terms of statistical growth of passengers or tons, but in terms of how well you serve your community's needs.

And, third, as your region experiences the rapid growth that has been triggered by this airport, watch the patterns and changing relationships carefully. Do all you can to manage the future growth with the same care and skill that you have shown in managing what you have accomplished thusfar.

Finally, I would say: America occasionally needs to be reminded of its greatness. Your remarkable airport is such a reminder. You can justly be proud of it. The Nation can be proud of it.

Good luck and safe flying!

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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR
AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF GOVERNORS'
HIGHWAY SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES, LAKE OF THE OZARKS,
SEPTEMBER 24, 1973.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted your Chairman's invitation to participate in your Annual Meeting. Improved transportation safety--and especially safety on our highways--is one of the Department of Transportation's highest priority objectives. But objectives, by themselves, do not reduce accidents or save lives. This can only come through action programs--the kinds of programs you, the Governors' Highway Safety Representatives--are uniquely equipped to design and help carry out.

I met last May with Mr. Cordell Smith, along with Mr. Elbert Peters and Mr. Noel Bufe, and learned about the work of your organization. At this meeting it came through loud and clear that here was a competent, determined group hard at work in seeing that the states were fulfilling their proper safety roles. I found this to be a very satisfying meeting, and I indicated that you could count on our help and cooperation. I share President Nixon's belief that more power and resources should be returned to the states and communities--to those best equipped to deal with local problems. Clearly, your concepts of highway safety fit that pattern well.

We have few truly "Federal" highways in America. Roads built, in part, with Federal-aid funds are "state" highways--maintained and patrolled by the states. Similarly, the safety of those highways is properly a state and local responsibility. Our Federal function is to prescribe standards, to assist financially in achieving those standards, and, when appropriate, to demonstrate through special action projects and programs how states and localities might better meet their safety objectives.

As a matter of principle we believe that the states should adhere to Highway Safety Program Standards. Just as the quality and design of Interstate highways should be consistent from state to state, so should motorists be accorded the protection of reasonably uniform safety requirements.

I see our mission as one of working jointly, not just to meet minimum standards, but to significantly improve highway safety. Our priorities may vary, our procedures may differ, but I know of no better way for partners to work together--and to work out differences--than face to face.

Since I've got you all right now facing me, let me start by commenting on three important subjects:

First, the Federal safety role; second, the highlights of the 1973 Federal-Aid Highway Act and its provisions for greater safety; and, third, some joint efforts to improve driver responsibility and competence.

I see the Federal role as a mixture of advisory, regulatory, legislative, and fiscal actions. We cannot police the Nation's 3.7 million miles of highway, or license the country's 112 million drivers. We can use our regulatory

authority to set standards; we can seek legislation as necessary; we can provide financial incentives and fund studies and demonstration projects; and we can work with motor vehicle manufacturers, safety groups, and state and local authorities to help develop a stronger National safety ethic. We certainly need your guidance in telling us how well we're doing these things and where changes in methods and emphasis are in order.

My own interest in automobile safety precedes by many years my appointment to the President's Cabinet. Too often I have seen, as have you, the enormous personal tragedies that result from accidents that should never have happened. I came to Washington with a fair appreciation for what already has been accomplished--thanks to Government, industry and community action--in making highway travel safer. But my early months on the job have driven home a painful fact: significant progress from now on will challenge all of us to our utmost.

The problem clearly goes beyond the mere establishing of proper laws and the erecting of signs. We've already got all kinds of state laws. We've got thousands and thousands

of roadside warnings and advisories. Yet it is evident from last year's 57,000 deaths and four million injuries that far too many drivers are not obeying the laws and are not paying attention to the advisories and warnings. We learn, too, that for a variety of reasons many of these laws are not being adequately enforced, lawbreakers are not adequately punished, drivers are not being sufficiently trained, selectively screened or properly motivated.

The dimensions of the problem you and I face can partly be seen from a statistical portrait of the motor vehicle's influence in our society. Vehicle registrations now exceed 118 million, including 97 million automobiles and 21 million trucks and buses, plus a growing and worrisome assortment of motorcycles, trailers and recreational vehicles. Our National affluence reached the point last year where the number of registered vehicles now slightly exceeds the number of licensed drivers. During 1972 U.S. highway vehicles traveled 1.2 trillion miles, and--as this group well knows--took more than a thousand lives a week.

It's this last number that concerns us--the stark reality of such an increasing death toll that compels us to action.

But as we plan our future actions it's important to recognize that some gains are being made--we are saving lives. Compared to a decade ago, we clearly have safer vehicles, safer roads, and substantially better state and community traffic safety programs. These efforts are achieving results. If the fatality curve that prevailed in the years before the passage of our Safety Acts in 1966 had continued unchecked, there would now be at least 50,000 more motor vehicle traffic victims in our Nation's cemeteries.

But while the fatality rate is decreasing, continued increases in total highway mileage are pushing up the number of persons killed. You see the registrations increase each year and you see the thousands of new drivers entering the fold. Total figures from all the states show that every day we add some 12,000 more cars to our highways; every day we grant licenses to about 10,000 new drivers. Every day, in other words, we must work harder to keep from slipping behind.

Yet despite this steady growth, I am hopeful that we shall soon also see a drop in the actual number of fatalities. The Federally-mandated safety improvements incorporated in new automobiles beginning in the 1960's are clearly having a

favorable effect. We estimate that 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.

At present, seat belts are available for 9 out of 10 passenger cars. Yet they are being used less than a quarter of the time. Despite this low usage, we estimate that the belts that are being worn are saving more than 3,000 lives a year.

The new interlock system, mandatory on the 1974 cars that are just now coming to market, should raise belt usage still further. We recognize that the system may also raise a few tempers. But while it may raise tempers--it will also save lives. If total usage--usage in all cars--can be pushed up to the high percentages we could quickly see a 10,000 to 15,000 reduction in traffic deaths. No other single action could save so many lives so quickly and so cheaply. It is for this reason that we are urging the states to enact mandatory seat belt laws, and offering a 25 percent "bonus" in "Section 402" funds to those that do.

It's worth noting that private-car driver and occupant fatalities are now actually showing a slight drop. It's the increasing pedestrian, truck, bicycle and motorcycle deaths that are pushing the total up. The changing "mix" of vehicle types and weights thus poses a new range of problems for state licensing and enforcement authorities. We believe Federal standards can be useful here and are anxious to find ways to help you deal with these new problems.

We are also watching closely the development work on the air cushion, as well as experiences with the 2,000 cars that are in test service. While there are still legal questions on the test standards that must be resolved before we can move much further, we were pleased that General Motors has decided to offer air cushion systems as options in up to 100,000 of their full-size 1974 cars. This program should yield valuable additional experience. We plan to follow the results very carefully.

As another aspect of our Federal safety strategy, we have focused our research efforts on what appear to us to be high pay-off areas. This is not done in any desire

to usurp the authority of the states or to exert Federal control over local functions, but in the interests of exploring areas with a high potential for saving lives. Better control of the drinking driver--the real villain in highway deaths--is one such area.

I believe that 35 Alcohol Safety Action Projects in operation across the country are a most worthwhile experiment, but they obviously represent only a beginning in what must become a National program to reduce alcohol-related fatalities. We now know that, experimentally at least, the drinking driver can be found and he can be taken from his car--before he drives himself, or someone else, to an early grave. What we don't know yet is how to do this effectively on a nationwide basis.

We know that alcoholism on the highways will not respond just to enforcement, or just to education, or just to social action. Alcoholism is a complex problem, and only a balanced program of careful diagnosis, strict enforcement, prudent adjudication, professional rehabilitation, and constant alertness by all the agencies involved can bring the progress we so much want and need. We are confident that alcohol countermeasures can be effective. But they will save lives

only if they are applied, which means that state and community leaders must be equally convinced of their value. We look to you to help make this happen. Alcohol-related traffic deaths will fall only if state and local safety initiatives make them fall.

Let me now turn to a brief review of some of the safety provisions in the 1973 Federal-Aid Highway Act which President Nixon signed into law last month. In total the Act calls for a three-year, \$23 billion highway and mass transportation construction program. For the first time, it permits urban planners to use flexibility and common sense in deciding how best to use urban highway dollars.

Funding for the Section 402 highway safety program provides \$100 million for the current fiscal year, \$125 million for next, and \$150 million for the third year. Those 402 programs administered by the Federal Highway Administration were granted an additional \$90 million. Along with the incentive grants for states where seat belt laws are enacted, there are similar incentives available to states which demonstrate significant progress in reducing fatalities. It would be a great day for all of us if every state could qualify for these incentives.

The new law calls for a series of safety studies. It asks the Department of Transportation to evaluate the various techniques of driver education; to study the connection between the use of drugs and highway accidents. We are also going to look into ways of getting citizens groups further involved in highway safety and into ways of using mass media for safety education. We are also asked to study the value of a National center for statistical analysis of highway operations. All of these activities require the participation and support of the states. We intend to see that the benefits are returned to the states.

Unfortunately, there is one section of the Highway Act that we cannot endorse. Section 229 transfers from the Department of Transportation to the Congress final authority for issuing Section 402 standards. We believe that this action seriously limits our future abilities to manage our safety programs. We hope it will be changed.

The new Highway Act also provides for six separate highway construction programs directed specifically at safety. They include construction involving highway-railroad grade crossings; bridge replacements; high hazard locations;

roadside obstacle elimination; pavement marking and safer road demonstrations. For these programs, more than \$1 billion is authorized over the three year program.

Before leaving the Highway Act it should be noted that in administering this program--as with a great many other Federal programs--President Nixon must consider the National impact of the overall expenditure rates. We all very much want our high-priority special programs to go forward--and will work to see that they do--but we must also fulfill our obligation to maintain a sound National economy. The President is working hard to find this proper balance--especially in his efforts to bring inflation under control. We seek your understanding and your support of this effort.

Not a part of the Highway Act but an action of significance was our recent announcement that we are for the first time setting Federal safety standards for vehicles in use. These standards concentrate on the critical areas of braking, steering suspension, tires, and wheels.

This new action is based on a study that showed that some six percent of accidents are caused by mechanical

failures from wear and degradation. There's also evidence, though less conclusive, that an additional 10 percent had similar causes. Further analysis showed that 80 percent of all the accidents involved, in varying ways, the specific components named in the new standards. Clearly, we need to do something to see that critical vehicle subsystems are maintained properly.

The standards become effective in October and will be implemented by state vehicle inspection programs. Let me emphasize that what we propose are minimum standards. They are not intended as replacements for state inspection procedures that are more comprehensive or more stringent.

Now I'd like to turn to the subject of driver performance and driver responsibility.

Of the three system elements--driver, vehicle, and highway--the driver is clearly the most difficult to regulate, control or influence. But just as clearly, he is also the most in need of these actions. According to the National Safety Council, improper driving is a factor in 90 percent of all accidents. Yet a study by our National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of various state and community

countermeasures showed that programs of driver preparation and control can be the most effective in saving lives. In making this analysis, driver preparation and control programs were considered to include driver license reform, diagnostic and remedial driver training, and driver education with the emphasis placed on driving performance.

Our Department strongly advocates driver re-examination--including tests for knowledge and vision--at least every four years. Moreover, we believe licensing agencies should be assisted by medical advisory boards, not only to certify to the fitness of those re-licensed but to designate the appropriate restrictions where driving limitations are indicated.

I cannot conclude without commenting on perhaps the most perplexing of all driver problems: the problem of the high fatality rate of our young drivers--the 16-24 age group. These drivers, though trained and mostly quite skilled, nevertheless have an annual highway-related fatality rate of nearly 50 per 100,000. This is double the rate of the 25-65 age group. I'm personally appalled by this situation. I solicit your ideas. New ideas and new approaches are clearly needed. What indeed can the Nation do?

Finally, let me say that despite the many difficulties of our safety problems, I am hopeful about the long-term. The fact that we're working together on these key issues is in itself good news. While we will likely make no major breakthroughs, if we can constantly chip away at the problems, we will, in time, make good progress. At times it will be discouraging. All the world knows when safety fails; but only a few know how often safety succeeds.

But we can show results. I am impressed, for example, that our joint "Fatal Accident Reduction Enforcement" Program (FARE) seems to be showing such good results. Even at this early date the success of the program in only a few states is sufficient to justify the full cost of the whole program.

Another encouraging event was my recent success in recruiting Dr. James B. Gregory as the new Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. I have known Jim Gregory, both personally and professionally, for nearly 20 years, and I have the greatest respect for his managerial, administrative, and technical skills. I am confident that he will bring fresh insights and approaches to our Nation's safety problems, and I am sure you will find he has an open door and an open mind.

He and his staff will be working with you to simplify the state highway safety plan and annual work program. Again, we welcome your suggestions. And in reporting results of safety programs, tell us your successes--but at the same time don't be reluctant to tell us about those programs that didn't work as hoped. Others can benefit from your experiences, the bad as well as the good.

Clearly, we all have our work cut out for us. But while it's not easy, I'm confident that our partnership is the way to do it. "Saving lives" is an inspiring objective. I'm honored that my time in public service gives me this chance to help you work toward that objective.

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