



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

# NEWS

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REMARKS DELIVERED BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR BEFORE  
THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY SAFETY ADVISORY MEETING, WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 24-25, 1973

I am pleased to have this chance of welcoming you to our Department. Your backgrounds and experiences in safety are impressive. We can use your counsel, we need your counsel.

Transportation safety is a major item on my agenda of big issues. Some 60,000 people a year are killed in transportation accidents in this country -- and, as you are aware -- mostly in or by automobiles.

As a newcomer, I ask myself:

What is a realistic safety goal? Or goals?

What is a realistic way of achieving that goal? Or goals?

What is the proper role of our Department in transportation safety?

There is some solace in the knowledge that something we are doing is we are saving lives. The accident rate is going down. New cars are safer, and the cars that will be coming along in the next few years will be safer still. New highways are open. Our vehicles and our highways and our drivers are all being improved. The safety rate looks better every year.

We are being challenged, however, by growth. Our drivers are increasing by about 3 percent a year: our vehicle registrations are growing about 4 percent, and vehicle miles traveled are increasing at a rate of about 5 1/2 percent a year.

It's not clear, however, that these rates of increase will be constant. Three other elements of our transportation puzzle will affect automotive travel.

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The first of these is the full range of environmental concerns. The Environmental Protection Agency has listed some 37 major metropolitan areas where new transportation strategies must be initiated to meet clean air standards. The main thrust of these new strategies will appear to be restricted use of private autos and increased use of public transit. We are encouraging this transition.

The second restraining element is energy availability and usage. We shall all be driving slower -- either by choice or if not, by state regulation -- to save on fuel. And we shall all be driving more alertly -- also in the interests of conserving fuel.

The shortfall of gasoline supply over gasoline demand during the coming months will be between 1 1/2 and 5 percent of demand. The effects of this shortfall will range from localized spot shortages to widespread shortages at the end of the summer. Next summer it could be worse.

We are urging drivers to slow down. We will be urging them also to look into car pools and to use their cars and trucks more efficiently. Autos will, consequently, be driven slower; they will be driven more alertly, and they will be driven less. Experience tells us these factors should mean fewer accidents.

The third factor affecting motor vehicles usage is intra-urban transportation congestion. The national concern for this dilemma is fairly recent and long overdue. Unfortunately, the result of this neglect is painfully obvious -- especially during the rush hours. We have concentrated for decades on projects for connecting our urban centers with highways and airways and on ways for making the centers ever bigger through easy financing and various other encouragements to urbanization. We have spent billions on getting people and goods from city to city. But moving around within our cities? Quite clearly this question got lost somewhere in the shuffle. But with some two-thirds of the Nation's population now living in these urban centers, we can no longer avoid facing the issue.

I was impressed last week with a visit to Phoenix to observe a crash test of one of our Experimental Safety Vehicles. I am convinced such sponsorship by the Federal government of research and development in vehicle safety is properly the business of the Department of Transportation. I believe that setting standards of safety in the manufacture of automotive vehicles -- cars, trucks, or buses that are sold or operated in interstate commerce is also our proper function. And the construction of the interstate highway system in accordance with rigid safety standards is very definitely our responsibility. I feel, too, that our propagation of safety standards for the states is also proper. And our very impressive alcohol countermeasures program is a very commendable form of Federal and local cooperation.



I would like now to pay tribute to you members of the Committee who are leaving us. I am certain you have helped point us in the right direction and we appreciate your services.

To you new members, I say welcome. I hope you will be active and I hope you will contribute. Highway accidents are killing too many Americans -- particularly among our young people. They are also costing us too much in time, energy and funds. These losses must be reduced. I do not seek to restrict our Department's efforts in behalf of our highways' safety. I do hope to point it toward the right targets. If we can save more lives by turning our highway safety efforts in new directions, we shall do it. If we can save more lives and cut property losses by expanding some of our safety programs, we shall do that too. The key word is "results" -- how do we achieve results?

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