

Remarks
Secretary Brinegar
National Newspaper Association
March 8, 1973

Thank you, Dave, and good afternoon.

Certainly there are few institutions closer to a community than its newspaper--and no group better qualified to reflect the mood and the manner, the tone and tenor of grass-roots America than the publishers of our community papers. As I travel around America I find that if I really need to know what's going on it's essential to include the community papers in my reading list. Often, in fact, I wish I could start my day with nothing but a few of these papers, rather than the inevitable Washington Post and New York Times which are always waiting for me at each morning's breakfast table, almost daring me to read them.

So, it's a particular pleasure to have this opportunity to discuss with you some of the things we are doing in the Department of Transportation, especially

in the vital areas of highways and urban transit.

President Nixon believes quite strongly that decision-making authority should be returned to the people--to the community--as much as possible, along with the funding to help put those decisions to work. There are, of course, overall fiscal constraints that must be recognized, but by and large, this policy is implicit in the Administration's transportation programs. And, in my opinion, today's improved prospects for moving ahead to achieve the transportation our communities really need should be the kinds of "good news" that are so often hard to find in any newspaper.

Since President Nixon invited me to join his Cabinet last December, I have been spending a great deal of time studying the state of mobility, or the lack of it, in America--taking inventory of our transportation knowledge, if you will, and an accounting of the problems at hand and ahead.

I can report that I find universal agreement on the importance of transportation to our society, but a great variety of views on how our future transportation needs should be met. It's certainly no great discovery to observe

that transportation changes the land around it and, in turn, is then changed by the changes. There is no more dramatic illustration of this effect on transportation than the development of much of our own nation. How many of our cities began as "Tank Towns" and "Whistle Stops"? Or "Portlands" or "River City Junctions"? And our way of living is still being shaped by transportation. Huge shopping centers appear because of beltways and bypasses, not vice versa. Thus, we see that transportation planning and policy making is a complicated interrelated affair.

We tend to think of our personal transportation needs in highly personal terms: we want it to be accessible, reliable, comfortable, convenient, private, and reasonably economical. We want to be free to go where we please, when we please, and how we please. And since the automobile fills that bill better than any other alternative, we have become a nation on wheels.

One trouble with that situation, as we now realize, is that the very popularity of the car, at least as we now know it, is threatening its utility. While this

is still predominantly an urban problem, I know there are places, even among our smaller towns and communities, where the streets and roads are congested during parts of the day to the point that travel by car is no longer comfortable, convenient, or reasonably economical. In some of these situations, more or wider highways and related facilities may be enough to make driving a good thing again. But in others it may not. And in all cases, the solutions must recognize the need for proper environmental protection and for intelligent usage of our dwindling energy resources.

The President has made it clear that we must do a better job of community development. To me that translates, to a significant degree, to better transportation development. Transportation actions affect land use policies, the economy of the community, its link with other communities, and its desirability as a place to live and work. These actions also affect the comparative cost advantages of our products and, in turn, our relative positions on world trade. Then, too, we must remember the needs of the one-quarter or so of the people of our land who do not or cannot drive.

These are a few of the things we are considering as we formulate our programs to achieve a better balance in transportation. More specifically, these are the principles embodied in the 1973 Highway Bill that we are now encouraging Congress to enact. For our rural communities this Bill will mean more and better roads, safer roads, the accessibility of more people to those roads, and more availabilities to bus service. For our urban and suburban communities, it will mean a choice most cities do not now have--the flexibility to choose among highways, busways, and, if the usage is great enough, even better rail systems so that their "mix" of transportation works more efficiently and effectively. We think these choices can best be made at the local level, where the knowledge of local priorities and abilities truly exists. This is what the 1973 Highway Bill is trying to accomplish.

I wish to stress that there is nothing in our proposals to infringe on the progress of rural highway development. I believe it's worth noting--and I hope Mr. Bartelsmeyer mentions it in his presentation--that there will be more money for rural highway projects than in previous years. I think the nation has done a good job

in its Interstate Highway System, which is 90% complete. Now we seek to bring our urban mobility up to the standards we have come to expect in Interstate travel. These moves are logical extensions of developments of recent years. The key words are "flexibility"--not inflexibility--and "intelligent resource usage"--not just using the dollars because some funding procedure says "use it or lose it." The era for the "sugar bowl" type financing that inflexibility encourages should be over. It's a luxury we can ill afford as we try to use the nation's resources as intelligibly as possible.

The highway and public transportation legislation put before the Congress is fully consistent with President Nixon's formula for dealing with many of our domestic problems. "Not higher taxes or more spending," he said in his February 2nd prelude to a series of messages on the state of the union: "not higher taxes and more spending, but less waste, larger results, and greater individual freedom and initiative." He advocated "flexibility" for states and localities in meeting their needs in their own way and according to their own priorities. The Federal responsibility, in the President's view is to provide the

funds, the incentive, and the motivation to get on with the job. I fully support that view.

Let me stress some specifics regarding our highway and mass transportation proposals:

1. The large amounts of monies needed to help urban transit systems will come from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration's direct funding of various capital grants. These grants, which total about \$1 billion per year, come from the General Fund, not the Highway Trust Fund. These grants provide the big "front-end" money.

2. The proposal to use a portion of the Highway Trust Fund for various urban transportation uses is prompted by the need to bring flexibility and rational decision making into the local trade-off process. It is not a substitute for the UMTA grant program.

3. The Administration's proposal for a flexible urban fund is embodied in an amendment to the 1973 Highway Bill known as the Muskie-Baker amendment. This is the amendment that we seek support for.

4. This amendment is in no way a "raid" on the Trust Fund. It is a logical use of the monies to meet pressing transportation needs that are quite related to

past uses. The amendment does not affect the amount of money going to any state, but only offers some new options on its use. Also, it does not affect the allocation of funds to rural highways. This total is independent of action on the Muskie-Baker amendment.

I appreciate your interest. Perhaps next time we can go into railroad and airport programs. But today the high priority is on highways and urban systems proposals. Now, my associates will go into further details on this and other Department matters.

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