



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE
BEFORE THE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE,
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I am delighted to be here to talk briefly to this audience of committed Republicans. And let me say, too, how appreciative I am that you are taking the time to come here to Washington -- taking the time to hear from the Administration you put in office. In order to learn more about what we are trying to do in our respective areas of responsibility.

In my own Department -- Transportation -- we have the unique Republican opportunity to orient the vast majority of our work to the needs of people.

We are working together -- with a solid team of real experts -- to keep this Nation on the move, and to do it within the framework of a clean and compatible environment.

In the words of the Conference motto here "together we can" build a splendid future for this Nation. It's not easy, let me tell you. Times are changing rapidly. Back in the year 1900, the cry was "look, there goes a car!" In 1940, we used to tell our youngsters,

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"look, there's a horse!" And now today, it's "look -- there's a pedestrian!"

Just as a matter of interest, I might point out that this is one Cabinet member who happens to be a physical fitness "nut" and if we had a few more Americans walking short distances instead of jumping into their cars, we would not only have a lot less traffic congestion, we'd have a healthier nation!

At any rate, I want to again praise your taking the time to be here this week. And I want to take the opportunity in these few moments to brief you on transportation challenges....and this Administration's approach to solving them.

Let me start by reminding you that throughout American history, Republicans have played a major role in developing the greatest transportation network the world has ever seen.

Our philosophical predecessors financed and promoted canals in the early frontier days. We Republicans aided the westward expansion of the railroads in the 1860's. We pushed the Panama Canal project in 1906.

In the 1920's and 1930's we aided development of the automobile and the airplane. In the 1950's under the late beloved Dwight D. Eisenhower, we started the fabulous interstate highway system, which is nearing completion now. It was also during the Eisenhower Administration that we built the Saint Lawrence Seaway and developed the first nuclear merchant vessel.

Our transportation network is the largest, the most complex and the most efficient in the world. Our principal task now is organizing and integrating our transportation services so that we meet the simple, human needs of our people. We must make a massive and unprecedented effort to solve our immense problems of crowding, congestion, and environmental decay.

Certainly we cannot solve these problems unless the Federal Government sets a good example of managing its own transportation affairs. The Department of Transportation was created four years ago to ensure that Federal activities were centrally coordinated, to aid innovation in private transportation companies, to stimulate technological advance, --- to devise long-range transportation

policies for the country as a whole -- and to use transportation investments as a prime tool for the enhancement of our heritage of natural beauty.

Republicans eagerly supported the establishment of this Department. Today each of our 100,000 employees has a real job to do.

-- Our Federal Aviation Administration is responsible for the control and the safety of more than 14,000 flights a day. They do this with a system that is unparalleled anywhere in the world -- a system that we are continually developing in order to keep pace with the growing needs of aviation.

-- Our Federal Highway Administration is in charge of building the fabulous interstate highway system -- almost 30,000 miles of which is now complete and saving thousands of lives and millions of driving hours every year. The Federal Highway Administration also is supervising our TOPICS program (Traffic Operations Program for Increased Capacity and Safety) to make more scientific use of existing roads and streets by constructing bus turn-outs, overpasses, and passing lanes and redesigning congested, unsafe portions of roadway. Modernized traffic signals and regulation of traffic by type are also a part of this effort to get more out of our highway investments.

-- Our Federal Railroad Administration is hard at work trying to prevent the collapse of rail passenger service in this country and will soon have important new duties in the area of rail safety.

-- Our Urban Mass Transportation Administration is conducting demonstrations in cities large and small throughout the land to upgrade vital public transportation.

We also run the Alaska Railroad, operate the American side of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, and manage Dulles and National Airports.

We even administer the Standard and Daylight time laws.

Apparently, when they were discussing who would be in charge of this law someone said "time flies, so put it in the Department of Transportation."

Be that as it may, I think the Department of Transportation has come into being just in the nick of time. We are adding 10,000 vehicles to our streets and highways each day, and the volume of traffic will increase 50% by 1980. The railroads are handling at least 15 million more ton-miles every day. The number of air passenger miles will triple over the next 10 years.

As incomes rise, our people will be traveling more and consuming more. The problem is that we cannot meet this huge future demand for transportation services efficiently with present-day technology and organization. What was splendid yesterday, and is still passably good today, will be intolerable in 1975 or 1980.

Perhaps that sounds too severe. But look at the facts:

-- Cars now cause 50% of air pollution nationally and up to 90% in some urban areas. These airborne poisons are reaching critical levels.

-- Traffic delays are so bad that cars now average about 13 miles per hour in downtown areas and anybody who commutes these days probably takes a couple of hours every day to get from home to job and back again.

-- Experts say traffic jams are directly connected to emotional problems and heart disease.

-- Noise background in this country has risen 3000% since 1939 -- and a lot of it comes from trucks, buses, and commercial aircraft. It is a substantial health hazard.

-- We lost 56,000 lives last year from auto accidents -- ten times the number killed in all the violent crimes in America.

-- Junked cars are a major contributor to the problem of solid waste disposal.

-- Highways, once thought to be the answer to urban mobility, are more and more being opposed by those whose homes and businesses will be demolished.

-- Our railroads, once thought to be synonymous with safety, are increasingly plagued by derailments -- oftentimes of poisonous or explosive cargoes.

-- Our public transportation facilities have come near to bankruptcy; threatening 25% of the population with total loss of effective transportation services -- this in an age of urban expansion when mobility is a basic human requirement.

-- And of course the list wouldn't be complete without mentioning the wide-bodied or "jumbo" aircraft, which will be putting a great strain on airport facilities and access roads as people line up to get on board.

These are just a few of our human problems in transportation. They will not be solved easily or overnight. But to apply the theme of this Conference again, "together we can" overcome them.

President Nixon has boldly seized the mantle of leadership by taking measures to deal with the most critical of these complex and interlocking transportation problems.

First, the Department of Transportation prepared -- and the President sent to Congress -- a far-reaching plan to renovate our airways system. The Airport/Airways Act of 1970 roared through the House by a vote of 337 to 6, and flashed through the Senate on a vote of 77 to 0. It will provide \$15 billion over the next ten years to upgrade our air navigation and traffic control system nation-wide to assure your safety and convenience. The Airways Act is now in conference, but we expect it to be released momentarily.

Second, we have proposed a public transportation bill that would invest \$3.1 billion over the next five years to help us rescue and upgrade bus and other systems in cities large and small. We told the Congress the sorrowful facts about public transportation in this country.

-- In 1950, there were 1,400 transit companies; in 1967, only 1,100 were left -- 300 went broke.

-- In 1950, those transit companies operated 87,000 vehicles; in 1960, only 2/3 as many.

-- The number of passengers carried dropped by 1/2, and operating income fell from a plus \$66 million to a minus of \$67 million.

-- And finally we told the Congress that since 1954, transit systems have been discontinued in 114 cities under 100,000 population... emphasizing that there is a crisis in small cities as well as the big metropolises.

When the Senate heard these facts it realized there was only one logical course to take. Our Public Transportation Bill went through by the overwhelming vote of 88 to 4. It is now in the House and we are confident of good results there too -- even though we'll have to work even harder to assure passage, but we've got just about every Republican in the House working with us -- and as soon as we get enough discerning Democrats to go along with us, we will get this sorely needed legislation!

But we can't succeed without your support. You people are influential -- go out and make converts for this Bill -- talk to people. Show them that it will give a fighting chance to private enterprise in the transit industry. Tell them this Bill will provide the funds we need for research and development and demonstration of new technologies. Tell them it can help cut pollution and congestion. Remind them that it can speed up that trip to the office or factory. Point out that it can provide access to jobs for the ghetto unemployed. Tell those who fear urban violence that it can stabilize our cities and give them a powerful tool to shape the peaceful urban surroundings of the future.

We think the Public Transportation Bill is timely. It is a part of President Nixon's environmental campaign to ensure that our children and their children will enjoy the same heritage of clean air and water, open spaces, parks and natural wonders that we remember so well.

But during this year of Republican leadership, we have not stood still waiting for legislation to pass. We have been using the tools we already have in hundreds of ways to ensure that the transportation of the future meets the needs of all our people. We have promulgated additional safety standards for automobiles, promoted development of anti-pollution devices, and worked closely with Detroit on plans to build engines that will run on unleaded gasoline.

We have acted repeatedly to save the environment from the effects of development. We stopped an airport from being built next to the Everglades. We halted a road project that would have pushed through the historic French Quarter in New Orleans. And I gave orders that will prevent a super-highway from being constructed through historic Franconia Notch in New Hampshire, thus preserving it for outdoor recreation.

I have issued an order that from now on, replacement housing will, if necessary, be built in advance of any federally funded construction for airports, rapid rail lines or highways, to assure justice to home owners.

It is the intention of this Administration to use our transportation investments to gain the largest possible social and economic return. This naturally requires long-range planning of the most thorough-going and decisive kind.

You may be amused to know that when I went over to the White House to talk with President Nixon just after coming to

Washington, he stuck out his hand and before I could say anything he said: "John, get your experts together and work out a master plan for transportation in this country, to get us ready for the next twenty to thirty years."

And before I knew what I had committed myself to I had said: "Yes sir, we'll do it" and, as a matter of fact, we have been busy on that plan for over a year now, and we will be making a report and some recommendations to the President within the next ninety days.

My point is that President Nixon is a man who has his eye on the needs of the next generation, as well as this one. He believes in thinking ahead. He is committed to solving our problems -- foreign and domestic. He has faith in the American people and he is especially proud of you good Republicans who make our Party what it is, who provide that essential leadership at the city and county and state levels where the job of motivating and informing the people gets done.

The President needs your help, your support, and your enthusiasm in building the transportation system of tomorrow -- one that is safe, clean, fast and comfortable; one that is easy on the nerves, eyes and ears -- a system that is balanced, humane, and efficient.

These are Republican years -- years of opportunity and challenge. And we don't have time to waste, for today the turn of a decade is as momentous as the turn of a century used to be. Can we fulfill the promise of the 1970's. Together we can.

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