



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

59-S-70

EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS, GEORGIAN ROOM, STATLER-HILTON HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1970, 2:30 P.M.

It is a privilege for me to attend this conference.

In this time when destroying things is so popular and criticism is so easy, it is a pleasure to address a group of professionals who understand the importance of building a better world -- and, of course, I mean that literally.

I have spent the better part of my life dealing with men dedicated to the design, construction and management of our great engineering advances.

I am happy to bring you the greetings of a President who shares your concern. President Nixon is determined to be a builder of peace at home and overseas. He is the first President in 20 years to spend more on domestic programs than on defense. He is dedicated to the law as the foundation of progress and justice in this land. And -- as you well know -- he has made a forthright and irreversible commitment to a decent environment for all Americans.

Certainly there is no more timely domestic issue today than your conference theme of how to preserve and enhance our urban environment. Archimedes said that if you gave him a lever long enough he could move the world. Well, you hold that lever in your hands. What you do as builders and planners over the next months and years will have an enormous effect on the quality of urban life.

- more -



You have already provided engineering leadership for a mobility and a standard of living that are absolutely unprecedented in history. This is a great accomplishment. But the tasks ahead are going to be much tougher.

We are living in a world exploding with new technology and new public demands for a better deal. Neither you nor I can ever go back to the days when pollution, congestion, ugliness and urban decay were accepted as the price of progress. Nor do we want to, because the opportunities for betterment are increasing every day.

Take transportation as one example. In the next 10 years we project an increase in air passenger miles of about 300 percent. Truck ton-miles will increase 50 percent. The number of cars is expected to rise by as much as 30 million. Even the railroads, bless their iron souls, are presently hauling at least 15 million more ton-miles every day.

If some of you are shaking your heads in disbelief, I don't blame you. When I came to Washington and my staff told me that we would have to double our transportation capacity in 20 years, I couldn't believe it. So I said run those projections through the computer again and get me some reliable facts. And then they came back and said, "Mr. Secretary, you were right. It's more like 18 and 1/2 years". That's when I stopped fighting the computer.

We cannot meet such levels of demand simply by doubling the kinds of highways, railroads, barges, aircraft, trucks and cars we have today. Down that road I see nothing but absolute chaos and strangulation on a regional scale.

President Nixon sees it the same way. That's why the first thing he said to me when I came to Washington in 1969 was "John, get your people together and create a National Transportation Policy. We've never had one; we need one now." Well, we went to work on that and I expect the finished policy draft will be enunciated in the very near future. But that is just part of the story.

We are also developing an overall assessment of future transportation needs, scheduled for completion in 1972. This survey will estimate transportation demand in detail for periods of 10 and 20 years ahead. It will suggest new means of accommodating that tremendous demand. It will show how Federal programs can spearhead a balanced transportation system and take timely advantage of new technology.



We intend to consult with professional associations, business, research groups, universities, and state and local governments. We will need your professional input on ways to assure effective mobility for passengers and freight at future demand levels -- and that future is arriving every day.

I therefore see your opportunities increasing over the next months and years. A special report of the ASCE prepared for our Department and the National Science Foundation shows that an \$11.4 billion, 10-year research effort by some 20,000 professionals will be needed to properly explore and advance the civil engineering aspects of transportation technology. We currently invest only \$50-million per year on this kind of research.

The report says, and I agree thoroughly, that "If transportation is essential...transport research...is essential".

One thing is certain. There is going to be a tremendous amount of construction activity in the field of transportation during the coming years and the variety of projects will be greater than ever. The emphasis will be on automation, inter-modality, simplified paperwork, multi-modal interchanges, and inter-disciplinary planning---with architects, economists, public officials, ecologists, labor unions, and community representatives all playing major roles.

There will be more systems planning so that transportation can meld with housing, medical centers, and places of learning and recreation.

I expect a rapid move toward multiple development of rights-of-way, air rights, and even the spaces underneath elevated highways.

The air, land and sea modes will be used more efficiently and co-operatively, and they will be tailored to the environment so as to improve our standard of living. Transportation will become the master key to the redesign of entire urban regions, like the Atlantic Corridor, of which New York City is today the rather hectic and congested nucleus.

All of this progress will depend critically upon your experience, enlightenment, and ability to keep innovating under radically new social conditions. Above all, you must help us assess the full potential for each mode in the broadest social terms.



We know that we cannot ram highways through cities or build airports in wildlife refuges or permit the internal combustion engine to poison the air we breathe. We've got to reduce noise. We have to stop oil spills, safeguard our parks, protect homes and historic places, and at the same time open up the wonders of America to ever-larger numbers of vacationers and tourists. What greater challenge to civil engineering could there be? The opportunities for systems thinking and technical innovation are limitless.

We will rise or fall by how we develop our cities. This is where 70 percent of Americans live today and where 85 or 90 percent will live a few years hence. I think engineering-minded people will agree -- and Federal Highway Administrator Frank Turner himself has stated this -- that the urban highways now being implemented will be the last conventional highways ever built in metropolitan areas.

That doesn't mean highways will disappear. Not in any sense of the word. It means that the fabulous system we have built up must henceforth be used more as a distributor of people instead of machines. When you get rid of the jargon, that means less cars, more buses.

Buses are a key factor in the urban mobility of tomorrow. Not city buses as we know them today, but the much quieter, comfortable, low-emission buses we are supporting in demonstrations in Dallas, San Francisco, and Washington.

Our Shirley Highway experiment outside Washington is proof of their potential. During rush hour the buses run in exclusive lanes. No congestion, no tie ups, no delays. They save the harried commuter as much as 30 minutes travel time. That kind of differential can lure motorists out of their cars in a hurry -- they can sit reading their papers while the other guy is fighting the traffic. Already patronage is up 19 percent.

In fact, we are so encouraged that we intend to try the exclusive lanes approach to speed the passage of buses through Lincoln Tunnel here in New York City. We think we can save 35,000 New Jersey commuters about 15 minutes travel time every morning -- and that might persuade others to leave their cars home and come in by bus.



Congress has fully recognized that radically upgraded public transportation is an essential step in saving our cities from dissolution. That is why our Public Transportation Act of 1970 flashed through the Senate on a vote of 84 to 4 and passed the House 327 to 16. The President signed the bill just last Thursday morning, and believe me -- it's a real giant step forward for the Nation.

This act provides \$10-billion over the next 12 years to save existing transit lines from bankruptcy, improve and extend services, and develop completely new systems. It also includes, I might note, \$500-million for research and development of new modes and methods.

Within the next year or two we expect to come up with a new noiseless, non-polluting bus engine, new types of rail commuter and subway cars, a number of so-called "people movers" and a 150 mile-per-hour tracked air-cushion vehicle in Los Angeles.

Our test-track for advanced TACV's running at 300 miles-per-hour will soon be completed in Pueblo, Colorado. All this may sound like science fiction today, but thousands of manufacturers, builders, engineers, and hard-hats will be making a living from them two and three years from now.

That great bridge builder and late colleague of yours Othmar Ammann once said "If an idea is taxable, it's workable". And I mention that because I know that new transportation systems attract an enormous amount of ancillary private investment. Businessmen in San Francisco and Oakland, for example, have already put \$850-million in new buildings and facilities around the BART subway stations. And the BART system -- as you probably know -- won't even be in operation until next year.

Yes, I foresee a renaissance of the central city flowing from our new mobility. Everyone will benefit -- and in every aspect of his life. Access to jobs, schools, shops, and recreation will be much easier. The air will be cleaner. And with new opportunity for reverse commuting from the ghetto, we will provide decent jobs for the poor.

This Administration sees transportation planning as essential for long-term management and preservation of our national heritage. We know that cities must move and breathe before they can work or play. We know democracy must solve problems before it can be respected. We know the human race simply cannot survive or prosper in a poisoned environment.

We are convinced this country can set an example for the world if only it will stick with its principles. We have much to be proud of -- and more virtues than faults.

And -- my friends -- we know that we live in the greatest nation in the world. There are those who knock this country. There are those who would spend far more time talking about what is wrong with America than taking a look at what is right with America.

To them, I would say only this: There are far more people trying to get into this country than there are trying to leave it.

The people of the world know that despite our faults we have set the pace for freedom, liberty, and justice for all. And because of this, we can have faith in our future. We have arrived at this point in history -- in large part -- because we have been a nation of builders. We will continue to build. We will build for a better day.

And I respect those builders -- I respect you ladies and gentlemen -- who have brought us such a long way in such a short time. I have often remarked that mankind had thousands of years to adjust from the invention of the wheel to the first automobile. But we have had barely half-a-century to go from the Model-T to the supersonic transport. Our times move fast. Our knowledge and skills are abundant. Our material resources haven't failed us yet. Our needs are great.

Yet -- as your conference theme points out so well -- we need a better environment and we must resolve to apply our technological genius to meet human needs.

With your continuing help and concern, we can be the first nation to truly master the vital challenges of urban society.

Thank you.

#####