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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT A LUNCHEON FOR BALTIMORE'S REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM SPONSORED BY THE BALTIMORE JAYCEES, LORD BALTIMORE HOTEL, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1972, 12:30 p.m.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to be with you today -- in more ways than one. Let me say at the outset that it is gratifying and encouraging to see an organization such as the Baltimore Jaycees take such an active and vital interest in mobility for the metropolitan area. Over the past three years I have told many many business leadership organizations in many many cities that without viable public transportation -- without socially-acceptable alternatives to the private automobile -- their cities would slowly but surely choke to death in a combination of congestion and exhaust fumes. The difference between those speeches and this one: we in Washington would usually have to go out and do the groundwork; convince the business community to have a transportation forum, make the arrangements, send out the invitations, and then encourage local follow-up. Here in Baltimore you -- the Junior Association of Commerce -- have taken a solid leadership role, and I commend you wholeheartedly.

Baltimore -- and the State of Maryland -- have demonstrated an unusual awareness of the transportation challenges of today and those of the future.

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U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION EXPOSITION
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT * MAY 27-JUNE 4, 1972

This is a great transportation center. This is a busy port at the headwaters of the Chesapeake; it is a rail terminus and a trucking center. You have an international airport. And if Baltimore is to continue as a vital hub of commerce, then it must also enjoy the benefits of mobility for the people who live and work here.

The case for public transportation in the cities of America is a solid one. Cities are too compact -- yet also too large, in terms of importance -- for circulation to be restricted by any hardening of the transportation arteries. And at the same time, cities are too small -- geographically -- for us to fill them with pavement, parking lots, gas stations and cloverleaves. Yet there are some -- who live in the suburbs and commute to the city in private cars -- who think they personally would be unaffected by the fortunes of public transportation. They could not be more wrong.

While public transportation is certainly needed for the very old, the very young, the handicapped and the poor, it must also respond to the needs of others if it is to succeed. It must not only reduce congestion on freeways -- it must also appeal to those in the middle income brackets who use their cars twice a day -- in rush hours only.

A healthy transit system means a healthy city -- with elbow room, with the free flow of commerce and ideas, with less frustration and more efficiency. We have learned this lesson well in and around the District of Columbia in the very recent past. Our Department -- in cooperation with local transit officials -- set up in the Nation's Capital a demonstration featuring a single exclusive median-strip lane for express commuter buses. The exclusive lane was added to Shirley Highway, a segment of I-95 south of Washington that is one of the most congested commuter highways in the East. Since the service was started last June, bus ridership has gone from 1,900 to 6,200 daily. At the same time, the number of cars on the road during the morning rush hours has dropped from about 8,400 to 5,700 -- a decline of nearly 33 percent. Local authorities attribute most of this decline to the new express bus service operating over exclusive bus lanes. This is what can be done with speedy dependable and convenient public transit.

And Washington isn't the only place where we're making bus transport more efficient. In New York City, we move 35,000 to 38,000 commuters during each two-hour rush period on exclusive bus lanes from the New Jersey Turnpike to -- and through -- the Lincoln Tunnel.

Out on the West Coast, in Seattle, our "Blue Streak" bus experiment is so popular that the fringe area parking lots are now operating at full capacity five days a week.

Some are trying to find solace in the thought that the traffic problem may be leveling off -- that metropolitan traffic congestion is at a peak. Let's not be fooled. While there has been a decline in the birth rate, the actual population is still increasing by about 6,000 per day.

Let's remember that there are 10,000 additional cars on the road each and every day -- that's a net increase -- and that some 10,000 American youngsters reach driving age every single day of the year. Yes, each day the traffic jams reach out further and further.

And even if we didn't have the congestion, we'd certainly have to deal with the pollution.

Considerations such as these prompted President Nixon to propose his landmark Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970, legislation that swept through Congress with wide bi-partisan support.

The new law joins the Federal government in partnership with local cities and towns in a major effort to revitalize our urban mass transit systems. This Bill provides \$10 billion over a 12 year period for transit assistance.

We have taken this law and put it to work. Up to the present our transit grants and loans have saved or stabilized bus transit systems in 60 American cities. Our funds have helped buy 7,900 buses, 1,100 rapid transit rail cars, and 885 commuter rail cars. We are, in addition, helping seven major cities to develop plans for the building of rapid rail transit projects and, of course, I am sure you know that one of these seven is Baltimore.

In spite of all this, there are those who say President Nixon's Administration is not committed to public transportation. The facts say otherwise. In the five years before President Nixon took office a total of \$613 million was spent by the Federal government on rapid transit. We shall have spent almost a billion dollars in the 18-month period ending June 30th of this year. But still this is not enough and President Nixon is recommending this year that mass transit obligations be increased by 65 percent for the Fiscal Year starting this July. This puts public transportation funding at the billion dollar level.

The President is determined to provide transportation assistance to the Nation's cities and towns. "In the past two decades," the President said in his historic State of the Union Message, "Highway building has been our greatest success story. Now we must write a similar success story for mass transportation."

We in the Department of Transportation are, then, transit minded. And I don't mind saying we are tremendously impressed by Maryland's unified approach to transportation -- particularly your state-wide interest in, and support of, urban transportation challenges. This is foresight at its best.

I want to observe here that I, as a Federal official, will not pass judgement on your State's proposed method of financing your local share for transportation needs. It is well within my province, however, to endorse

this State's creative approach in establishing a single multi-modal transportation trust fund which puts an umbrella over all transportation revenues -- including transit fares. I had a most productive meeting on this subject just day before yesterday with your Secretary of Transportation, Harry Hughes. I was delighted to be briefed on this matter and look forward to continued close cooperation.

I am, again, constrained from speaking on the merits of your forthcoming application for Federal funds for actual construction of "phase one" of the new Baltimore rapid transit system. Your application is now being processed by our Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and it would be improper for me to comment directly on an application under consideration. But I can certainly say that we are, however, studying it very closely. We are looking especially at technical and economic feasibility, and to use a cautious bureaucratic phrase -- we are not disinterested. Our Department has, after all, granted your area, during the past five years, \$3 million to plan the new transit system and make those technical and economic feasibility studies. I am told by our transit specialists that your technical work done under these grants is quite good.

And Baltimore has something else going for it. Something very important. The bus transit system here in this city is in a unique position. It is one of the very few transit systems in the Nation that handled more revenue passengers in 1971 than in 1970.

I was here a year ago for a ribbon cutting ceremony when those brand new buses (partially paid for by my Department) went into operation. We have about \$20 million in Federal funds invested in those new buses, and I can't tell you how delighted we are to see that increase in ridership. It's money well spent, with results like that!

Indeed, this city has retained its basic 30-cent fare and the M.T.A. operates in the black. You can see how important this is when you realize that it costs fifty cents to ride a bus even one block in Cincinnati -- and the same situation exists in Kansas City.

Continuation of this upward trend in Baltimore's ridership and revenue figures will depend, of course, on capable management, continued improvements in service, and aggressive marketing of transit. New patronage must be stimulated.

The State's Transportation Trust Fund and the M.T.A.'s success with bus transit service speak well for your application. But there are, of course, further requirements. We will, at the beginning, want to see convincing demographic data to support your need for the new transit system. I hope, also, you will recognize the tremendous impact that the new rapid transit system can have on shaping orderly growth in this region.

Close attention needs to be paid to how the transit system will be related to economic development and population changes as you build the system.

It should be kept well in mind that transportation facilities can and must be more than just responsive. Well-planned transportation facilities can be creative -- can improve land values, can enhance land usage, can make a community a far better place to live, work, and play.

In San Francisco the new BART system (Bay Area Rapid Transit) routed some elevated tracks through what we can courteously call a low-income area. In the past, the temptation would have been to hastily build some sort of superstructure down the right of way and end up with something like New York's old Third Avenue "el" -- which was really a blight and an eyesore. Instead, the BART people insisted on gracefully-designed concrete structures, pleasing to the eye, and the land beneath has been developed into linear parks and playgrounds. As a result, the entire low-income area is pulling itself up by the bootstraps because their environment has been vastly improved.

And on a more practical commercial basis -- we've learned a lot from the Canadians and their experience in Toronto. Even before their subway was built -- but as soon as the route was announced -- land values increased, new construction started on a sizeable scale, the tax base of the city was widened considerably, and the entire area was upgraded markedly. It's happened in Europe -- in Scandinavia. It's happened in New Jersey -- along the Lindenwold line. It's happening with the Metro system in Washington.

And it certainly can happen here.

Good public transportation -- convenient, comfortable, safe, reliable, and marked by courteous service -- does expand the economy. Does improve the urban area. Does make your city a pacesetter as we rise above what used to be called the "urban crisis."

Make no mistake about it -- public transportation is an absolute urban necessity. It is no longer a question of whether public transportation will survive in America. The only question is "how can we best make certain that it survives?"

Because survive it must, if we are not to be caught up completely by congestion and pollution which -- in the very near future -- will choke many of our cities if we do not save public transportation, upgrade public transportation, and yes -- build public transportation facilities from scratch where that is necessary.

In connection with those last remarks about an expanded economy and a better environment -- social as well as economic -- let me take this opportunity to say just a closing word.

I refer to President Nixon's bold leadership moves to get a handle on runaway inflation -- his bold moves to expand our economy and to stabilize the dollar. We are convinced from the economic news of the past few months that the economy is now beginning to hum. The boom in new housing starts, the continued increase in employment and the lowering interest rates are forerunners of increased production. And I expect to see the tempo speed up as the economy is stimulated by the President's recently enacted Tax Credit Program. The larger objective, however, is to keep the economy growing while insuring that this growth is not accompanied by runaway inflation. Here, again, President Nixon's initiatives are paying off. His Phase Two controls are beginning to grab and stick. We shall see results in the form of more stable prices and wages.

I say, then, we can, in our future reckoning count on the President's leadership. He has prepared hard and well, and the fruits of his work are near. I am sure you join me in wishing him well on his current mission across the Pacific in China -- and in all of his efforts to make this a better world.

Let me again congratulate you on your interest, your concern, your compassion for your city, your determination to excel.

As President Nixon said in his Proclamation for National Jaycee Week just a month ago this week, "Developing character in individuals, and mobilizing it through community action -- remains our most vital work."

Yes, character is our greatest national resource.

I am sure that the character displayed here in this city -- both individually and as a group -- will be a key factor in making this city the great workable city you hope to build. And we want to help.

Thank you.

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