



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE FIRST ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE, BELLEVUE STRATFORD HOTEL, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1970, 12:00 NOON

I am delighted and honored to address this first Delaware Valley Regional Transportation Conference. Since becoming Secretary, I have had the occasion to work with municipalities, with states, and with regional planning groups throughout the country.

And I am well aware that one of the main reasons transportation in this area -- while it still has room for improvement -- is a step ahead of the rest of the nation is because the Delaware Valley long ago began to look at the whole picture; long ago began planning on a region-wide basis, with a long-term point of view; long ago committed itself to an overview of transportation needs as well as other social and economic necessities. Such willingness to prepare for the future has paid off and will continue to pay off for this entire region.

These are times when we have the rare opportunity to change the face of the world; we have the technical capacity to destroy our world, or we can use that same technological ability to improve and protect our surroundings such as they have never been shepherded before.

I submit that this Administration and this President -- are providing sound leadership that will make a better America and will also create a lasting peace. I would remind this audience, as I have reminded others, that this is the first Administration in a quarter-century that has rearranged National priorities to the extent that we are now spending more for domestic programs than we are for defense.

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At the same time, President Nixon has established the Domestic Affairs Council -- giving as much weight and centralized concern to problems right here at home as we have given, over the years, to foreign affairs.

By reordering priorities, President Nixon has enabled government agencies such as the Department of Transportation to go to work and cope meaningfully with challenges that affect each and every one of us.

Think, for a moment, how important transportation really is in our daily lives. The very fact that this conference has been called -- and that so many of the region's influential people are here -- is solid evidence that you are already aware of the key role mobility has always played in our National development. Indeed, Philadelphia itself owes its existence to the river, the ocean and its proximity to other growing areas.

Now, of course, we are an urban society, living shoulder-to-shoulder in megalopolis-type areas here on the Eastern seaboard and elsewhere. Yet transportation is in no way less important just because the American people aren't coming to town from the farm every Saturday.

And any city -- any region -- that is not planning for total mobility for its people and its goods is well on its way to obsolescence. I say here what I have said to Chambers of Commerce groups in Atlanta, in Memphis, in Kansas City, Los Angeles, Seattle, Galveston, and throughout the country: Either we find ways to move people and goods efficiently, or our cities will become defunct as centers of economic and cultural development.

How, then, are we to cope with this challenge that confronts our society? I say one of the most direct and effective methods is through increased development of public transportation.

The time has come in the history of American urban development for us to consider public transportation as a public responsibility. The time has come for us to recognize that our health clinics, training centers, employment opportunities, our schools, our housing development, recreational facilities, model cities, and our regional metro areas -- will never be truly effective unless all people -- black, white, rich, poor, young or old -- have the opportunity to move within the systems and make the urban systems work for them.

Philadelphia -- and the Delaware Valley Region -- as I noted earlier, recognize this and are working to make the system work. And we will continue to work with you. We will continue to help.

This Nation just hasn't spent the money for public transportation in the past that it should have. We have a tremendous "catch-up" job to do. We need to get our Public Transportation Act of 1970 through the Congress and onto the President's desk so we can roll up our sleeves and go to work.

This landmark measure, proposed by President Nixon last year to give sorely-needed financial assistance to the strangling and choking cities and towns of the nation, passed the Senate by the very substantial margin of 84 to 4. I am delighted to report to you that both Senators Scott and Schweiker were active supporters of the measure. It now awaits action in the House, and the sooner we get this Bill the quicker we can get people moving in our urban areas.

This measure -- which will provide \$10 billion over a 12-year period -- will give the nation's cities (large and small) the assurance of long-term Federal funding that is needed in order for municipalities to be able to bank on Federal grants and raise their own share of the funds needed.

But I didn't come here today to talk solely about the efficient movement of people within the core areas of our nation's great cities.

In the area of highway construction -- within the city limits of Philadelphia itself we had obligations of \$31.4 million in fiscal year 1970 -- all part of some \$250 million in Federal funds spent on highways across the State. And I want to emphasize here that we are committed to help you complete your highway network in and around the city. Let me make it perfectly clear, however, that our basic creed at the Department is that transportation facilities are built to serve people ... and not vice versa. We do not approve Federally-aided transportation projects that adversely and irrevocably affect human beings, destroy neighborhoods, simply shift congestion from one area to another, or deface and destroy parkland or historic sites. You are well aware here in Philadelphia of the human engineering aspects of highway planning and construction, the Crosstown Expressway is an excellent case in point. I am aware of the Chamber's interest in this project, and I commend you for working with Mayor Tate, Governor Shafer, and the State Department of Transportation on this matter.

I know as well as you do that this particular highway has been a "hot potato" since it was first proposed in 1947. And I can only say here what I said before the Senate Subcommittee on Roads just last Wednesday. My testimony said "We support the principle that the implementation of Federal programs should be designed to eliminate, minimize or compensate for the adverse environmental, social, and economic impact of Federally-supported highway construction." In that same testimony, I again made the point I have made on several prior occasions -- that the Federal government is not interested in throwing people out into the streets in order to simply build more streets. And here again, we come back to the Public Transportation Bill I referred to earlier, and also to this fact which certainly deserves consideration: we do not use our present highways effectively enough. We clog and congest newly-built freeways with creeping bumper-to-bumper traffic -- cars which, on the average, contain about 1.5 people per vehicle.

Now doesn't it make more sense to put those people in a bus? Of course it does -- and of course, I know your answer. Buses in traffic jams move just as slowly as the cars do. The old buses fill the air with noxious fumes, they are uncomfortable, they are not a great pleasure to ride in. But consider this: in the Washington suburbs -- just yesterday morning -- Virginia's Governor Linwood Holton and I cut the ribbon on a new stretch of exclusive busway that runs down the median strip of Interstate 95 coming into Washington from northern Virginia. It used to take those buses 30, 45, maybe 50 minutes to get into town. Now, with their own exclusive lane, they whip right past all that 11-mile an hour automobile traffic. Commuters from 10 miles out of the city get to work in 20 minutes -- and they don't have to drive that car, they can relax and read the morning paper.

This is a great experiment .... and it's working. Since the first stretch of busway was opened less than a year ago, patronage on those bus lines went up by close to 36 %. The buses are fast, they are clean, and the service is excellent. So we can attract riders, we can make money doing it, and we can make better use of the highways we already have.

Yes, where we simply cannot build more freeways -- for whatever reason -- we must find better ways to move people with the facilities we now have.

And since we're talking about innovations, let me share with you for just a few moments some of the new innovations in transportation whose time has come. Innovations that you will ride on. The first, and most exciting of these, is the tracked air cushion vehicle (called the TAC-VEE for short).

This machine travels on a concrete guideway, floating on a thin cushion of air. No wheels, no frictional drag. The one we have in mind will be propelled by a linear induction motor -- no air pollution, and no noise. It will travel at speeds of up to 175 miles an hour. Science fiction, you say? Not any more. We signed contracts last spring to build a TAC-VEE system out in California, serving Los Angeles International Airport. The technology is perfected, the system works. They have had an experimental model in France, and a United States firm has joined with the French to bring that expertise to us here.

Another innovation in transportation is the STOL aircraft; S-T-O-L standing for "short take-off and landing". Operating from short landing strips close in to the city center, these 100-passenger turboprop planes can make it from, say, downtown Philadelphia to downtown Manhattan in less time than it would take if you had to go out to the airport here, catch a jet, and then find a way to get into Manhattan from Laganrdia or Newark. STOL aircraft are coming. Various models are being tested now. They are definitely a part of the near future.

And of course with high-speed railroading, the Metroliner is a start. There have been developmental problems -- a few persistent mechanical bugs -- but the fact that we are experimenting, doing something, is far better than discussing theory and sitting around drawing boards. The Metroliner is an innovation from which we are learning many things. And as technology moves ahead through demonstration projects such as this, I am confident we will be getting more people off the highways and onto efficient, fast, clean and effective modes of transportation.

The influence of transportation systems is indeed all-pervasive. And the design of the systems must be totally equated to the needs of the people. In the next twenty years we will have to double the transportation capacity of this nation. Yes, in the next two decades we will have to provide as much transportation capacity in this nation as has been built since the founding of this republic right here in Philadelphia in 1776. That doesn't mean building twice as many roads, cars, trucks, airports, or railroad cars. It means long-range planning; it means efficient utilization; it means knowledgeable application of our most vital skills; it means full and total concern from the people who will use that transportation capacity for the movement of themselves and their goods.

We are an urban nation -- and this is one of the nation's strongest urban centers. When William Penn chose this location for real estate speculation and social experiment, he selected the most strategic spot in the Delaware Valley. Yet a city has to be able to breathe and move before it can work or play. Once we understand that essential fact, urban America will be well on the way to revitalization.

We must work together. We must step around the setbacks and the stumbling blocks. We must be innovative, imaginative, and cooperative. The long-awaited renaissance of the American city could begin right here in Philadelphia -- and it could begin well before the Bi-Centennial when America comes home to the city of its birth. The Delaware Valley region -- through continued sound comprehensive planning -- through continued cooperation among municipalities, the States, and the Federal government -- through a community-wide determination to excel, can set an example for the nation.

One hundred and ninety-five years ago, in declaring our independence, brave men took a stand in this city. They took a stand to achieve freedom.

The problem today is still how to achieve freedom -- but now it is not freedom from oppression; now we seek freedom from the consequences of prosperity and urbanization. And it is again a time for brave Americans.

With the courageous leadership of this Chamber of Commerce and your leaders in government, you people here today can demonstrate that urbanism is one of man's noblest achievements.

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