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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U. S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, BEFORE THE MISSOURI AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION, TAN-TAR-A, OSAGE BEACH, MISSOURI, MONDAY, JUNE 14, 1971, 7:00 P.M.

I am delighted to be here with the Missouri Automobile Dealers Association. I am here this evening to ask that you and I work together. We face a joint challenge that requires joint resolution -- we seek answers that will be in our own best interests as well as the best interests of the American people.

Any discussion of the present and future role of the automobile must rest on certain undisputed facts. The first is that the private automobile provides the lion's share of the passenger transportation available in the United States. In 1969, the nation's total transportation bill came to a little more than 186 billion dollars. Nearly half of this went for goods and services in connection with the private car. The family car is an institution. We can not do without it.

The second premise of our discussion is that we are going to need more autos in the future. The predictions for Washington, D. C., for example, are most revealing. In 1968, there was an average of more than five million person-trips per day in the metropolitan Washington area. About 8 percent were handled by public transit. Looking ahead two decades, the prediction is that the same area will see a total of 12 million person trips per day. Some of these trips will be made on the new Washington Metro Rapid Transit now being built. Yet even with the full operation of this new subway system, trips by private auto will double during this same period and will still be 10 times the number of transit trips.

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We think these predictions are an indication of what is going to happen in most of our major metropolitan areas. To meet the travel needs of a growing population that is gravitating more and more to our urban areas, we are going to need both a tremendous expansion of our public transit facilities while facing increased usage of the private automobile.

It is this increase in the number of automobiles that gives urgency to our concerns. And this increase is already underway. During the 1960's our population increased 12 percent. During the same decade, however, automobile registration increased 44 percent. Even today the number of cars on our highways is increasing faster than the population.

Let me emphasize right here that in discussing these concerns, I am not interested in -- nor do I have time for either -- criticism or blame. I am only interested in seeing that the widest possible audiences both within the automobile industry and among the general public understand these challenges are willing to resolve them. Only in this fashion can we assure ourselves of the continued tremendous benefits of the automobile. The emphasis here is on the word tremendous. There is too much of a tendency in today's rhetoric on the proper role of the automobile in American life to overlook or forget the very positive contribution made by the family car. Of all the technological advances and the inventions of the past 100 years, the automobile has done most to increase the mobility of the American family. In a very practical way, the livelihood of most Americans depends on the auto. A Gallup Poll of two weeks ago reveals that 81 percent of American workers use their automobiles to get to work. I suspect about the same percentage of American families depend on the car to get their groceries, visit the doctor, go to church and all the other everyday activities of suburban living. Yet highways have become clogged with traffic, the cores of the cities have become neglected harbors for the undertrained and the unemployed, and bad air and dirty water have become unhappy facts of life.

The first challenge is downtown traffic congestion. The irritation and loss of time are in themselves sufficient penalties. But there is the matter of economic loss. The costs of traffic congestion are incredible. The New York Trucking Association found that the average truck operating in mid-town Manhattan lost four hours in earning time daily. Total cost of the loss every year for those trucks -- 150 million dollars. A consulting firm estimates that Baltimore drivers are paying a cost of 152 thousand dollars a day incurred by stopping at signal lights and the subsequent delays because of heavy traffic. The citizens traffic safety board of New York City says auto fuel consumption in the city is 30 percent higher because of traffic congestion.

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We must, then, get better utilization of our urban streets and highways.

The second challenge in formulating a sensible automobile policy is the recurring encounter between the family car and the environment.

The threats to our environment are many and varied. They are evident in the facts that the noise in our urban areas is increasing at an average rate of about one decibel a year -- that a cloverleaf interchange between two major highways takes up 40 acres of ground -- that about 40 percent of Los Angeles is paved over for highways, parking lots, and interchanges -- that each of our automobiles emits nearly a half ton of pollutants for every man, woman and child in the country every year -- and that the smog that covers our cities shows up on the radar screens of airplanes a hundred miles away.

Certainly, the automobile by itself is not responsible for all this. But it is a heavy contributor, and attention must be paid. We can not, to begin with, permit continuance of this air pollution that comes from the tailpipes of most automobiles. Something must be done. The challenge is to determine that best course of action.

Let me interject right here that I believe an answer will be found. I have great confidence in the automobile industry. The manufacturers have too many resources, too much talent, and too much at stake. And Detroit knows full well that the public attitude on this matter is not apathetic. There is a demand for low emission exhausts and it won't go away. The demand is solidified in the Clean Air Act of 1970 which sets air pollution limits to be reached by 1975. This act says automobile carbon monoxides and hydrocarbons must be reduced by 90 percent from their 1970 levels.

That is a pretty tough assignment and there are some who say it can't be done. Unfortunately, we must make these reductions. The urgency is evident in a recent speech by Bill Ruckelshaus, head of the Environmental Protection Agency. He said that -- even if these reductions in individual cars are achieved -- six of our larger cities will still have to change their travel patterns in 1975. In other words, the increase in the number of vehicles will offset the gains made by emission reductions. These six cities are: Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D. C.

Now I believe these gains in emission control will be met and they will be met by the internal combustion engine. But I must note that alternate power sources are being investigated. Various Federal agencies, including our Department of Transportation, are studying the possibilities of steam, electric, "hybrid" and turbine engines.

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The third challenge we face is improved highway safety. And we have, in this matter made a beginning. Last year the number of highway fatalities actually decreased. This is the first decrease of any kind since 1958 and the total decrease of 1100 deaths is the largest ever. I think we can attribute this victory to improvements right across the board -- safer cars, safer drivers and safer highways. And I want to see these improvements continue.

We in the Department of Transportation are not just talking about safety. We are working at it. We are helping to build safer highways. The accident rate on our interstate system is superior to that on roads below interstate standards. In terms of statistics -- for each 5 miles of interstate highway we build, we save one life a year -- every year. If there were no other reason for the construction of the magnificent interstate system, that fact alone would be sufficient.

More directly, we are working with the states to eliminate danger points on highways already built. We are providing funds to eliminate bad curves, dangerous intersections, and other highway hazards contributing to highway accidents.

We are also working with the states in other fields. Our National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has set some 16 safety standards to be followed. They cover periodic inspections, driver education, alcohol countermeasures, motorcycle safety, and 12 other areas. We provide financial assistance to those states which adopt these standards. And we have the right to impose financial penalties on those states whose safety programs don't measure up.

And we set safety standards to be followed in the manufacture of automobiles and tires.

All these programs are working. They are saving lives. We have statistical proof that our drive for improving crash survivability is showing results. But I am not satisfied with these efforts.

We also have a vigorous safety research and development program. We have contracted with three companies to design and build experimental safety vehicles. We are asking that the final product of this design competition be able to protect its occupant in a 50 mile-an-hour head-on collision and a 70 mile-an-hour roll-over.

It will include every safety and air pollution protection system possible. The prototype E.S.V., when finally completed and tested, should prove invaluable in determining the feasibility and potential of new auto safety standards.

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There is also another very important safety factor involved in more than 50 percent of all highway fatalities: alcohol.

The drunk driver problem causes about 25,000 highway deaths every year. Every man in this room probably knows at least one person -- probably several -- who shouldn't be allowed behind the wheel because they have a problem with alcohol. We know it, we see it, we even share the road with these people.

We must get them off the road. And we are trying to do this in a comprehensive federally-sponsored alcohol countermeasures program.

What we hope to do is demonstrate to one community after another -- with federal money -- what can be done and how to do it. When the demonstration is over it'll be up to the community or state to carry on. If we're successful, a lot of people in these communities will be involved in a program too good to stop-- and the states will pick up the ball.

I think we can move ahead with these challenges and I think you automobile dealers can help. You have special qualifications. You are, first of all, professionals in the automobile industry. You have the best interests of the automobile at heart. You know cars and driving far better than most. You are, at the same time, top "crackerjack" salesmen. Through your advertising -- and through your community activities -- you are well known and respected. You are also leaders in your local communities. You are, finally, the all important link between the manufacturer and the consumer.

You are, consequently, ideally equipped to take the leadership helping to resolve these difficulties in your home communities. And such leadership is needed. It is true that these problems of congestion, environmental damage and highway safety can be handled by regulation imposed from above. But they can also be partly resolved by voluntary action by industry and the public. The grass roots approach is not only necessary, it is the best approach. An aroused industry and an aroused public can provide effective and prompt solutions. I urge you to join in and help make these facts known. Such an effort will be in the best interest of everybody concerned.

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