



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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OPENING STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE,
PRESS CONFERENCE, CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1972

I want to begin by commending the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Alcohol Safety Action Project. As one of our original nine projects, they have done a tremendous job here in public education, enforcement, rehabilitation and their many other project responsibilities.

We are attaching a great deal of significance to these projects because of their potential impact on the drunk driving problem. We now know that alcohol is a factor in over 50 percent of all highway fatalities. Last year that would have been over 25,000 alcohol-related deaths.

I have visited alcohol safety projects all over the country. And in every case, arrests are up, rehabilitation is increasing -- and second arrests are down. We're getting drunks off the road and on the wagon.

There is one aspect I want to stress. That's the pre-sentencing investigations. This is where the real determination formulates as to how to help an excessive drinker-driver. And that help must be an integral part of the court system which judges his crime.

You know as well as I do that a jail cell seldom -- if ever -- cures alcoholism. And by the same token, a slap on the hand doesn't do much to deter the murderous drunk from drinking and driving again.

There is a delicate balance between the sometimes conflicting factors of enforcement and rehabilitation. Our courts must walk a thin line in determining the relative merits of confinement, license confiscation, medical programs or educational opportunities. But we are helping judges make those determinations with an expertise never before available. And the results are paying off. Not only are we getting drunks off the road -- we're keeping them off.

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We're expecting even greater results as we get more experience. We intend to establish once and for all in America that the drunk driver is a potential killer and maimer and must be removed from the roadways -- and treated so that he can safely drive again.

Before answering your questions, I have one other announcement to make concerning transportation in Charlotte. We have approved \$2,291,275 for improvements at Douglas Municipal Airport. These funds will provide 50 percent of the cost of constructing a new 10,000 foot north-south parallel runway, strengthening of the terminal apron, construction of bypass taxiways, and relocation assistance involving 50 families.

The Douglas Airport, as you know, is essential to efficient transportation in this area. It handles about 200 air carrier operations per day -- and in fact set a new record in March by boarding over 82,000 passengers.

We are concerned about all modes of transportation in Charlotte -- from highway safety to airport efficiency. And I'm pleased to be able to make this announcement.

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