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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION SEMINAR, ST. ANSELM'S COLLEGE CAMPUS, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE, MAY 17, 1972

The state of transportation has changed significantly in the 15 years since this series of seminars began. And it is changing again, even more.

The principal architect of change is President Nixon. His goal is to make transportation "a better servant of the people." He has called for more money where money will do the most good -- in transportation planning, and in research and development. The President's budget for Fiscal 1973 includes $450 million for research, development and demonstrations. That's a full 50 percent more than for 1972.

President Nixon wants that money put to work to produce transportation systems that will make a difference in the quality of our lives -- to make travel safer, the air cleaner, our cities quieter and less congested, and the job of getting places easier.

These goals cannot be achieved overnight. But, as the proceedings of this seminar have demonstrated, the wheels of improvement are turning. President Nixon has set the Federal adrenalin flowing.

We have behind us new legislative tools, greater fiscal resources, and a firm commitment to the attainment of a balanced National Transportation System.

We have before us a wealth of opportunities, a willing industry, and a crop of technical prospects waiting to be harvested.

We have ahead of us the promise of transportation systems that will serve, not enslave, our cities; uphold rather than degrade the quality of life: and make transportation of people and their goods safer and more secure.

These are worthwhile goals. They are realistic goals. They are part and parcel of our transportation policy. And, as the President said in his State of the Union Message, "1972 is a year for action."

Now I am well aware that the vast majority of you are most interested -- from a professional standpoint -- in the efficient distribution of raw

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materials and finished products from source to consumer, from seller to buyer. And this, without question, must be the foundation of any policy that tries to delineate national transportation aims and goals.

But because this is the closing dinner of the seminar -- and because I've had a chance to look at the program you've gone through over the past two days -- let me bring some "balance" (if I can use that word) and talk to some degree on the mobility of people in our urban areas.

I know I run a certain risk; the railroad industry has been known to whisper that sometimes I talk as if passenger traffic is still a major function of railroading. It isn't. Not for a while yet, anyway.

And occasionally the truckers have indicated that I seem to think more in terms of automobiles that motor freight.

But I would like to try to inject two lines of thought into the closing hour of this seminar.

First, there's not much point in trying to move goods through a nation that has a population paralyzed by inadequate personal transportation. And since some 70 percent of our people live on two percent of the land -- that is, in and around urban areas -- that, obviously, is where people's merchandise and goods have to be delivered. And you don't market much merchandise to underemployed people trapped in congested cities.

The second point is that while we talk about passenger traffic versus freight traffic, we tend too often to make it sound as if these are two very separate transportation responsibilities. They aren't. Just as you or I might sit at the wheel of a car exasperated because trucks are clogging the road, truck and bus drivers often have the same legitimate complaints about all those cars stretching ahead over the horizon.

The point I'm making, of course, is that freight and passenger movements are totally inter-twined. They do interface; they cannot be considered separable, because they are not.

With that in mind, then, let me talk to you -- men and women basically involved in freight transportation -- about moving people. Because you sure ought to know about it. It does affect you.

Our passenger transportation system today is heavily weighted in favor of the automobile. That has been the public choice, yet the results of that imbalance are plain to see. In the 20 years of rapid suburban growth from 1950 to 1970, 300 transit companies failed, 13 rail commuter lines abandoned service, and patronage of public transportation dropped by the millions. In the same 20-year period, the number of private cars in use throughout the United States doubled, from 40 million to 80 million. Now only 18 million people ride the Nation's mass transit, while an estimated 50 to 60 million commuters drive to work every day.

Some 340,000 cars creep into downtown San Francisco every workday. An estimated 600,000 vehicles converge on Manhattan. In Boston, about 160,000 cars funnel into the city center, which has off-street parking space for 28,000.

This trend away from public transit must be reversed. That is the whole thrust of our Urban Transportation Program. But we do not expect the public to go back to another era. It is not our purpose or desire to force people out of their cars and into decrepit buses or antique trains. We will reverse the decline in transit ridership when we restore the public's confidence in public transportation as a faster, cleaner, cheaper, and more efficient way to travel in the urban environment.

New life for mass transit begins with new fiscal resources. The purpose of the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970 was to give mass transit a new lease on life. By the end of next month we will have obligated as much money for mass transit in a year and a half as the Federal government spent in the preceding five years -- a billion dollars. For FY 1973 alone, President Nixon has proposed a billion dollars, $841 million of which will be earmarked for capital facility grants.

With the increased funds already available, we have preserved or stabilized bus transit systems in 60 U.S. cities. Since 1969 we have bought more than 6,000 new buses and nearly a thousand commuter and rapid rail cars. We are helping finance rail projects in a half-dozen of our largest cities.

Last year we awarded a $53 million capital grant to the Chicago Transit Authority to begin a 20-year modernization of their entire system. We gave Pittsburgh $60 million to move ahead with their intermodal transit program involving busways, modernized trolley service, and a new rubber-tired rapid rail system. We gave the City of Atlanta $30 million to acquire the local bus company, purchase 490 new buses, and buy land for park-and-ride lots. And just this morning, I announced a $9 million grant to Boston for subway modernization.

But our Urban Transportation Rescue and Renewal Program is by no means confined to the big cities. Federal funds <u>are</u> available to the communities that need them -- large or small.

Last year we awarded a total of 99 capital assistance grants worth $486 million, and 62 technical study grants totalling $15 million. The technical study grants enable a community to assess its public transportation needs. We want communities to develop transportation capabilities that reflect <u>their</u> choices, not ours.

That's the purpose behind the $34,000 technical studies grant for Manchester that I announced here this afternoon. It is also the thinking behind our current proposal to make resources available from the Highway Trust Fund for urban transportation needs, whether or not those needs involve new highways.

I've been "approached" by a number of my friends in highway-related industries on this matter. In fact one of them came up to me and said: "Is this the same John Volpe who used to be President of the Associated General Contractors of America? Is this the same John Volpe who was the Nation's first Federal Highway Administrator?"

And the answer, of course, is no -- it's not the same John Volpe. It's a John Volpe who has had a chance to get a look at the bigger picture. It's a John Volpe who's been sitting in a different chair for the past three years. It's a John Volpe who knows that you haven't really solved any of the transportation problems until you've identified all the transportation problems. And it's a John Volpe who knows that we just don't have all the answers in Washington.

We want our cities to have the funds they need for urban transit renewal, but we also want local people to make the decisions on how the funds should best be used.

Under President Nixon's urban transportation plan, cities and states could finance urban roadways, busways or rapid railways, on the same 70-30 matching basis. We have recommended starting the program off at a billion dollars the first year (Fiscal 1974), progressing to $2.25 billion in Fiscal Years 1976 through '79.

In addition to a transfusion of funds, we must transform mass transit to make it competitive with the car.

One way is to make public transit a faster and more efficient way to go.

Two years ago, before we funded the construction of exclusive busways along 12 miles of the Shirley Highway into Washington, 12,000 Northern Virginia residents commuted over that busy highway by car, compared to only 4,300 who rode the buses. A morning rush-hour count last month showed a dramatic reversal of that situation -- 9,100 bus passengers and 7,700 auto commuters; a 54 percent victory for mass transit.

One swallow does not make a summer, but we believe the Shirley Highway experiment demonstrates that modern, comfortable buses operating over an exclusive right-of-way, provide the suburban commuter what he wants most -- convenient, fast, traffic-free transportation. Give him that, and the commuter will gladly leave his car in his driveway, or at a fringe parking lot.

Another way to make mass transit more appealing is to make it cost less to the user. The people of Atlanta recently taxed themselves to help finance a new transit system, and to cut the cost of riding the existing system. Fares were reduced from 40 to 15 cents and within a month ridership had increased 22 percent.

In Denver, on the strength of a five-cent fare reduction, bus patronage went up 17 percent in 1971, and is up 27 percent so far this year. Iowa City lowered fares and increased ridership from 1,900 passengers a day to an average of 4,000 a day.

But public transit's best route to renewed favor with the public is to imitate the automobile's ability to take a person where he wants to go, when he wants to go. The taxi supplies that kind of service, in the city environment, which is no doubt why taxi utilization increased 30 percent over the past 10 years. What we need is a public transportation system with the flexibility and responsiveness of the cab, but with greater efficiency at less cost to the consumer.

The "People-Mover" -- Personal Rapid Transit -- seems to answer that need. The concept has exciting potentials. Even Los Angeles, a city born on wheels and bred on freeways, is exploring the feasibility of a system that would shuttle people about the city in non-polluting, automated, personal-size transit vehicles.

Of the $115 million budgeted for mass transit research, development and demonstration work in 1973, $67 million is committed to new systems development involving new technologies. We will complete the Morgantown, West Virginia, PRT system this year, and we will be gaining more valuable experience from the four prototype People-Movers we will be exhibiting as part of TRANSPO 72, the U.S. International Transportation Exposition which opens just ten days from now -- on May 27 -- at Dulles Airport.

TRANSPO will declare America's leadership in transportation, will display new products and new technologies, and will demonstrate our progress in making the means of mobility safer and environmentally more acceptable. I hope a great many of you will be there.

Let me make one more point concerning improved mobility in urban areas -- whether that improvement comes from bus lanes, PRT's, expanded rapid rail service, or what have you.

One of the major goals of such improvement is the de-congesting of urban highways. If commuters are using an alternative mode, then it stands to reason that existing highways will become more useable.

The city expressways that are now choked with five mile-an-hour traffic can again become the 60 mile-an-hour freeways they were designed to be.

Isn't that worth anything to people who have to use the highways? I remember the old days -- when it took 6 or 7 hours to get across Massachusetts to Boston from the New York line. Now, with modern, divided super highways, you can go the length of that State in about 2-1/2 hours -- at least you can get within 10 miles of Boston.

But those last 10 miles -- the congested urban area -- chews up another full hour of travel time, results in wear and tear on your vehicle and a time loss for the driver, expands the risk of accidents in stop and go traffic, and results in sizeable, identifiable, out-of-pocket costs!

Let's de-congest those urban areas so highway traffic can move again!

We will continue to work changes in the transportation fabric of our Nation, not because we are displeased with all we have done to make America the most mobile of all nations; but because of what we have not done to balance that mobility, distribute the transportation load more evenly, and assure a ride for everyone who must travel.

Our compulsion to do better stems from our successes, not our shortcomings. As De Tocqueville, that perceptive 19th century observer of the American scene, wrote more than a hundred years ago: "All the abuses removed(from society) call attention to those that remain. The evil becomes less, but our sensibilities to it more acute."

Good as it is today, transportation in America can be infinitely better. Making it better is our responsibility. This seminar has pointed out the directions we must take. Let's all get on with the job.

Thank you.

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