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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, BEFORE THE CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORTATION AND HUMAN NEEDS IN THE 1970's, TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 1972, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Let me say how pleased I am that we could have a part in this conference. The theme of your program coincides with our mission at the Department of Transportation, which is to make more and better public transportation accessible to the nucleus of Americans for when the automobile is out of reach.

This seminar sets precedent by bringing together in one forum a wide cross-section of the users and the suppliers of transportation. With due respect to the distinguished speakers at this conference, I frankly expect that the greatest benefits will come during the informal dialogue.

We need this exchange of ideas. We in Government need your input We need to know what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong, what should be our immediate and long-range priorities to meet the Nation's requirements for mobility. And it's equally important that you understand our problems, our accomplishments, and our goals.

President Nixon's transportation programs are all "people programs." Examine any of his many transportation initiatives for the past 3-1/2 years and you will quickly find that the common thread is to make transportation <u>better</u> for people -- cleaner, quieter, safer, more comfortable, less congested -- easier on the traveler and the environment. We have outstanding people schooled and skilled in every mode. But our task is bigger than the improvement of the individual modes. Our pre-eminent job is to pull together to put the jigsaw of transportation

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together -- to make the elements function in concert as well as they do separately. Our goal is a balanced transportation system serving the needs of all the people of this great Nation. Maybe I can serve a similar "pulling together" function here.

When the Department of Transportation began operation five years ago, the agencies responsible for highway and aviation development were already well established. The railroads had no public voice at all. And urban mass transportation was just a tiny squeak in the loud scramble for funds in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Now the Federal Railroad Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration are two of our most active operating arms. What's more, the Federal Highway Administration works closely with them, and all three work together to produce intermodal answers to the total surface transportation challenge.

Our most compelling task is to revitalize urban transportation -- to release the strangle-hold the automobile has on our cities. This too, is an intermodal task, involving the co-operation of highway and transit planners, industry and government, citizen groups and community officials. It also entails a respect for technology and an awareness of what technical enterprise can do for us.

Generally speaking, technology has been taking it on the chin lately. There is a school of thought that blames science and technology for all of society's faults and most of man's problems. At the same time -- and sometimes out of the mouths of the same people -- technology is being called upon as the hope of the future. People ask -- over and over again -- "if we can put a man on the moon, why can't we get across town?"

"Why," they ask, "can we say with such certainty that Pioneer 10 will arrive at its closest approach to Jupiter at precisely 9:33 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, December 3, 1973, when we can never be sure what time the next city bus will come by?"

Because, my friends, the job here on earth is a great deal more difficult. Crossing outer space is not like crossing town. There are no municipal boundaries to be observed, no peak travel hours, no multiple routes or diversity of interests to be served, no landtakings, relocation problems, or environmental considerations. So the solution to our urban transportation dilemma must take the pattern approach, which includes short-term as well as long-term objectives, fiscal as well as technical "fixes," and programsdesigned on a community-wide basis.

That goal in mind, we must review and perhaps rework some practices and precepts that reach deep into the roots of our transportation traditions. Before this decade ends, for example, personal mobility may no longer be entirely synonomous with the private automobile.

While I believe automobiles are here to stay, I think we can all anticipate changes in the way we use our automobiles.

For instance, we are on the verge of perfecting a so-called "dual mode" highway system, whereby you drive from your home to a suburban interchange in the normal fashion -- but once you're on the freeway the vehicle is locked into a computerized automated guideway. You get 60 mile-an-hour speeds in bumper-to-bumper traffic and it's totally safe. You can sit back and read the paper!

When you reach your exit the computer automatically disengages your car from the guideway -- heads it into an off-ramp -- and you drive the last two or three blocks to your destination. This concept gives us maximum utilization of highways, and yet still provides the motorist with the flexibility that he wants. In some urban settings, travelers may be able to move more efficiently and with greater ease by means of P.R.T. -- Personal Rapid Transit -- than by car. And at lower cost, as well! P.R.T., in case you have difficulty envisioning what I mean, could perhaps best be described as a horizontal elevator "system." It follows a fixed route through the city center, and picks you up and drops you off at the push of a button.

We funded the demonstration of four different personal rapid transit systems as a part of TRANSPO 72. I hope many of you were among the million-and-a-quarter people who visited TRANSPO. If not, the people-movers are still there as working examples of the technologies available to cities for their urban transportation needs, and I hope you get to see them.

At TRANSPO, we also exhibited a full-scale prototype of the tracked air cushion research vehicle which is one of our bright hopes for high-speed intercity service. The cities of Dallas and Forth Worth are conducting a preliminary design and engineering study for a TACV system to link their downtown centers,with a stop at the new regional airport located midway between them. The TACV moves at 150 miles-an-hour on a ribbon of air, powered by a non-polluting linear induction motor.

The systems I have mentioned represent a sampling -- but by no means the sum -- of the technical possibilities in view for public transit progress. We have many other technical irons in the fire.

-- Our first dial-a-ride demonstration project, a full demand responsive system, is now under way in Haddonfield, New Jersey. This is the transit system you call to your door -- the bus that makes house calls.

-- We are proceeding toward the demonstation of a dual-powered commuter train; 3D rail electric power in and near the city, on-board turbine power in the outlying areas.

-- A program of rail technology test and evaluation is being conducted at our Pueblo test track.

-- And, in more mundane but no less important areas of technical exploration, we are contracting for the production of three new prototype buses. One innovative new bus, steam-powered, is already in use in Oakland, California, and is proving to be a successful and popular performer.

It must be obvious that there is an abundance of new technologies in hand or in the offing. All of these must be considered as one ingredient in a community's prescription for better public transportation. But there are many other factors, of equal or greater weight, that influence transit decisions: geographic circumstances, population densities, public habits and preferences, existing equipment, the shape of future planning, economic feasibility, and so on.

Yet much of what we have done for public transportation to date must qualify as only a first step. Since President Nixon proposed, and Congress passed, the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970, we have spent a billion dollars for public transportation, which is more than the total Federal funding for all of the previous five years. Additionally, the President has budgeted another billion dollars for mass transit for fiscal 1973. Faltering or failing transit systems have been saved or stabilized in some 60 U.S. cities.

We have proposed to help the cities even further by setting up a single category of funding, supported by Highway Trust Fund resources, for urban transportation purposes. We want to give the States and cities a choice of technologies, plus a choice of spending options. We believe local people know the problems best, and can do a better job of developing the transportation facilities they want and need. That's what our new proposals call for, and we certainly hope that Congress will see it as we do. The need is great. Nearly 300 transit systems have gone out of business in the last 20 years. There is no doubt that we must halt that decline and reverse the trend; not by forcing people to ride buses and transit cars, but by making public transportation so attractive the private car will become, in many instances, "second choice" for trips into town.

That is what has happened on the Shirley Highway coming into Washington from Northern Virginia. We have exclusive busways there, with express bus service for commuters, and we have turned rush hour statistics around; more Shirley commuters now ride the bus than drive.

A morning rush hour count last month with 80 new buses showed 9,100 bus passengers and 7,700 auto commuters; a 110 percent increase for mass transit, a reduction of 2,800 cars, and a more efficient use of highways for those automobiles.

At certain points during rush hours bus patronage is up 300 percent. The new flock of delighted bus riders find that they are saving -- on the average -- at least 30 minutes each way. As we demonstrate, by means of technology or by bold and innovative plans, that public transportation can be reborn and find new favor with the public,new and greater attention will be accorded the special needs of all who cannot, or do not drive.

Looking ahead, I am certain in my own mind that we shall be seeing in our cities a return of widespread use of public transportation. It won't happen overnight, but the trend has started already. The fact is that public transit is not only the best answer but it is the only answer to a number of major urban problems and a great many human needs. All of our proposals and prototypes for new urban systems and vehicles, for example, make allowances for the needs of the elderly and the handicapped.

Under President Nixon's pursuit of balanced transportation we have a whole new outlook. Preservation of the environment and beautification are now implicit in highway planning and construction. We have made a strong commitment to increased safety, especially on the highway. A single death is a tragedy; 55,000 deaths in one year is a national scandal and disgrace. We are determined to make our cars, our highways, and our drivers safer -- and cut the death toll in half.

This is a period of transition for transportation. It is also a time of trial. But as we labor together, so shall we reap the harvest of a more perfect mobility.

The solutions of today's transportation problems depend not on technology alone, or on the establishment of new travel habits, or even on the sums of money that can be pumped into new transportation enterprise. The solution lies in our ability to design and implement a mosaic of technical, economic and administrative programs -- tailored to the needs of people.

We shall do the job. Before this decade is ended, we will be able to boast that we <u>can</u> get from home to office as efficiently as we get from the earth to the moon, even though the task here on earth is much harder.

If we do not fail our transportation responsibilities, transportation will not fail to serve our human needs.

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