



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE TOWN HALL OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY, JUNE 5, 1972

When I took on this job 3-1/2 years ago, some of our "whiz kids" in the Department -- at one of my early briefings -- told me that at the rate this Nation is growing we will have to double our transportation capacity within the next two decades.

I told them that was unbelievable -- that they'd better go back to their computers and check that figure again. Well, they came back in a day or two and said "Sorry, Mr. Secretary -- we were wrong. It's more like 18-1/2 years." And that was 3-1/2 years ago.

Now when they say "double our transportation capacity," you know and I know that we simply can't meet the challenge by accommodating twice as many motor vehicles, building and maintaining twice as many miles of highways, or by doubling the number of aircraft that occupy the airways. Rather, we have to make greater utilization of facilities already in place. We need more efficient use of transportation resources already available. We have to get more "bang for our buck" as we move people and their goods from one end of the Nation to the other, from one side of the state to the other, from one part of town to another.

We've had to stop thinking in terms of moving passenger traffic and start thinking about moving passengers. We've had to stop thinking about moving trailer trucks or freight cars and think simply in terms of moving freight. In other words, a systems approach to mobility.

In order to start this new approach, we needed tools. And without taking up too much of your time with history, let me just tick off our major legislative accomplishments in transportation during the Nixon Administration. In 1969 we were approaching a difficult situation in aviation. Additional Federal funding for improvement of our airports and airways was long overdue. Our Airport-Airways Act of 1970 went through both branches of Congress with handsome margins, and it was that Act -- for example -- that enabled me to announce at my press conference this morning that we have approved a \$2 million, 173-thousand grant to Los Angeles International Airport for sharply-upgraded navigation and landing aids. This is part of a nationwide Airport Development Aid Program under

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which we will have allocated a total of \$280 million before this Fiscal Year ends on June 30th.

And that's just in aviation.

Let's move to railroads: First of all, the freight side. Rails carry 42% of all the ton-miles in this Nation every year, and if the railroads were to shut down completely, the other modes would be hard-put to pick up even 10 or 15% of the load. So obviously they are vital. But they are in trouble. They need help. And we have legislation before the Congress now: one bill dealing with regulatory practices, the other proposing Federal loan guarantees for a rolling-stock purchase program.

On the rail passenger side -- before I say anything else about Amtrak -- let me say that outside of the Northeast Corridor there very probably would be no passenger service whatsoever in this Country today if we hadn't prevailed upon the Congress to establish the National Rail Passenger Service Corporation. Amtrak is now a little over one year old. It's a multi-million dollar Corporation that is nationwide. And it would be expecting an awful lot of Amtrak for it to be in the black after only one year. Especially after many, many years of deteriorated passenger service. But they've turned the corner to such a degree that even some of the usually critical newspapers have printed feature stories about the special "fun" trains that ran from here to Las Vegas last winter, and about the fact that starting this coming Sunday, there will be a second Los Angeles-Chicago streamliner in addition to the Super Chief. And the coastal trains -- which run through such spectacular scenery -- will expand from three trains a week to daily service. So give Amtrak a chance -- and give it a ride now and then. Amtrak is making the trains worth riding again, and it needs your support. (That's my commercial!)

We also achieved passage of a landmark highway bill in 1970 as we geared up for the new approach to transportation. That highway bill enabled us -- for the first time -- to utilize portions of the Highway Trust Fund for purposes other than the exclusive design and construction of highways. Now don't get me wrong. There's no one in this world that can call me "anti-highway." But by the same token, there's no one in the world who can tell me that highways alone are ever going to solve our transportation problems. That Highway Act of 1970 set a precedent, and we're following up with more legislation -- legislation that is before the Congress right now -- which I'll discuss in greater detail in just a moment.

Let me first, however, move on to what was probably this Administration's most significant transportation legislation -- the Public Transportation Assistance Act of 1970. This Act made it possible for us, for the first time in the history of the Nation, to give cities and towns positive assurance that continued Federal financial aid for urban transportation would be available on a long-range basis. And in the 18-month period that ends June 30th, we will have allocated more money for public transportation than came from Washington in all the six years previous -- \$6 billion.

We've done this because we know that this Nation cannot thrive without viable cities -- and we know that cities cannot thrive if they are congested with traffic and if the air is filled with exhaust fumes. Two years ago I addressed the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and I said then what I'll say now: a city without good, efficient, clean, safe, frequent and courteous public transportation service is an obsolescent city, a city slowly headed for death by strangulation.

Since that time we've worked closely with the Rapid Transit District-- the RTD -- to keep Los Angeles from arriving at that state.

Los Angeles can be proud of its recent accomplishments in public transportation.

The Department of Transportation has granted assistance to the RTD to modernize and expand its bus fleet; to acquire the assets of a private operator furnishing transportation to east Los Angeles; and for the express busway in the median of the San Bernardino Freeway.

This latter project -- the busway -- is a landmark in inter-governmental co-operation. Your RTD came to us with this idea in 1969. I approved the grant in June of last year; we had secured the co-operation and financial participation of both the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration in my Department, your RTD, the California Division of Highways, the Cities of Los Angeles and El Monte and the Southern Pacific Railroad. Close co-operation on one important project such as this is true progress. And I might point out that at the Department of Transportation we know busways work.

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% increase for mass transit, and a more efficient use of highways for automobiles. The new flock of delighted bus riders find that they are saving -- on the average -- about 30 minutes each way. And those who are still using their cars are finding a heck of a lot less congestion.

I predict you will have the same success with your busway here.

Another RTD project funded by the Department of Transportation has required the same co-ordination and financial co-operation. I am referring to the dramatic downtown minibus system. The RTD furnished the local share and we matched their money on a two-for-one basis for the purchase of your colorful minibuses. Local government -- the County, the City and the Community Redevelopment Agency are all contributing to the cost of operations.

The minibuses are carrying people quickly and economically throughout your downtown area at the rate of more than one million passengers annually, many of whom have not been regular transit riders. And RTD has extended this system to a new "park-and-ride" service from the Convention Center to the new high-rise office center, keeping more than 500 automobiles daily off of your downtown streets while providing low-cost parking to people who work in the area.

This is another example of inter-agency co-operation at the local level with your RTD that we take into consideration at the Department of Transportation.

We are looking forward to other exciting programs conceived in the same spirit of co-operation. RTD is working with the City and its C-R-A on a "people mover" system to provide off-site parking and transportation to the Bunker Hill area, with possible future extensions of the system to the Civic Center, Dodger Stadium, and the Convention Center.

The Department of Transportation is now reviewing applications for technical studies on this "people mover" project.

Now let me get back to the upcoming legislation I mentioned earlier. It's directly related to the problem of mobility in our cities.

Because of the importance of urban transportation, and because of the necessity of solid, long-term Federal support as well as similarly solid local involvement, we have presented to the Congress a new Urban Surface Transportation Program.

This program would establish a Single Urban Fund, financed with the money from the Highway Trust Fund, that would provide capital investment funds for any type of surface transportation improvement -- highways, rapid rail systems, exclusive bus lanes, personal rapid transit systems, or any other transport innovation.

I believe that this program gives us the tools to be creative, innovative and responsive to the changing transportation demands in America.

It would mean also that the initiative for solving transportation problems would be placed where it belongs -- with the leaders of those areas most familiar with the problems.

Of the \$5.5 billion anticipated to be in the Highway Trust Fund in Fiscal 1974, \$1 billion would go into the Single Urban Fund for surface transportation improvements. That figure would rise to \$1.8 billion in Fiscal 1975, and \$2.2 billion in Fiscal 1976.

And I want to point out that this is not just a big city program, or a mass transit program, or a highway program. It is a transportation program.

It does not alter in any way our commitment to finishing the Interstate Highway System. And, in fact, it strengthens our commitment to build and improve highways not on the Interstate System. A new rural Federal-aid system and a Rural General Transportation Fund would be established.

The funding levels of these new proposals would insure a higher quality rural road system than presently exists. And for the first time, Federal funds could be used to build county roads and bridges -- so vital to rural mobility.

The primary goal of this legislation is flexibility -- the ability to have money follow the priorities rather than vice versa.

We've drawn up this program fully realizing that transportation needs here in the Western states differ greatly from needs in New York, New Jersey or Massachusetts. Let me emphasize this point as heavily as I can: If a state -- or an urban area -- wants to spend every last nickle of its money from the Single Urban Fund for highways -- well, you go right ahead and do it !! If you want to set aside 5% or 10% to solve a particular congestion problem in a metropolitan area -- go right ahead and do that ! The decision won't be made for you in Washington !

This is not a program to promote mass transit, or railroads, or tracked air cushion vehicles, or highways. It is a program to promote the very best transportation possible.

It is a commitment to excellence in America. It is a declaration that we know we are capable of doing the job that needs to be done.

My plea now -- to the Town Hall of California and to the Nation -- is to put our new-found technology, our new ability, to work serving the people.

Yesterday at Dulles Airport near Washington we rang down the curtain on the first United States International Transportation Exposition -- TRANPO 72. It was a phenomenal success.

But what was most impressive to me was that John Q. Public -- the average man with his wife and children -- saw the new transportation technology and said we need it.

Mobility in our Nation and in our cities is no longer the sole concern of transportation experts, sociologists or urbanologists.

The people want it. They know we can do it.

And we intend to get results.

Again, my thanks for inviting me to be with you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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