



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

16-S-72

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LECTURE SERIES, WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY, WILNER AUDITORIUM, WICHITA, KANSAS, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 1972, 9:30 a.m.

It is a great honor and a high privilege for me to participate in the Eisenhower Political Lecture Series. The past 20 years of my career -- in public service and in transportation -- are due in large part to President Eisenhower.

His life was a personal inspiration to me when I first entered political life in Massachusetts two decades ago, and that inspiration continues to this day. For those of us from humble beginnings (my Dad was a plasterer and I started as a hod carrier at the age of 12), President Eisenhower's life reaffirms America's greatest traditions of personal achievement and dedication.

I think it is significant too, that this continuing tribute to such a great figure in history is part of the curriculum of this University.

A university becomes great only as it fosters a frank exchange of ideas and views. It should be a market place of ideas -- with nobody selling out.

My personal feeling, having visited a dozen campuses in the last few years -- is that the vast majority of students in this Nation are deeply and sensibly concerned about the future of the human race.

You're looking for answers to the problems you see around you -- and believe me, so are we in Washington.

I would urge you to come to Washington and help us solve these problems. A number of programs in my Department -- and in the rest of the Federal government -- have been developed and are being monitored by men and women in their twenties and thirties. These young people have

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U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION EXPOSITION
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT * MAY 27-JUNE 4, 1972

one distinct advantage over some of us older folks -- they don't know something "can't be done," so they just go ahead and do it. I admire this freshness of thought and viewpoint. We need more of it.

But I am not here today to talk at you, or about you. Rather, I look upon this as an opportunity to give an accounting; a chance to give a report as Secretary of Transportation on the steps we are taking to improve the quality of our everyday life -- both today and tomorrow -- through increased mobility for the Nation.

Transportation is -- and always has been -- America's lifeline. It connects resources with consumers. It fosters the spreading of ideas. It enables us to expand personal horizons -- to know more about the world in which we live.

Americans now drive more than a trillion miles a year. We fly several billion miles. We generate the movement of about two trillion ton-miles of freight every year.

And the coordination of this activity, the responsibility for efficiency and propriety, falls upon us at the Department of Transportation.

Let me give you just a thumbnail sketch of the Department. We consist of seven "operating Administrations," involved in air, land and sea transportation.

The Federal Aviation Administration is responsible for our tremendous air navigation system, as well as certification of aircraft and pilots.

Over the past three years we've given the FAA additional tools to do the job. We proposed (and the Congress passed) the Airport-Airways Act of 1970 which provides \$12 billion over a 10-year period for airport development, airways expansion and modernization, and improved aviation planning at all levels.

Already we've brought about a sharp increase in the number of air traffic controllers, and are giving them sophisticated computerized equipment with which to do the job.

The Federal Highway Administration oversees the design and construction of our huge Federal-Aid Highway Program -- which is highlighted by that great facility initiated by President Eisenhower, the Interstate Highway System (now 3/4 complete).

The Federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration -- which works closely with the highway people -- is fostering our sharply-upgraded quest for mobility in and around our cities. (And I would remind you that despite the open spaces you are used to in Kansas -- nationally we are faced with a situation in which 80 percent of the people live on two percent of the land. Urban transportation is a massive and important challenge, and I'll have more to say on that in a moment.)

Our Federal Railroad Administration has been working vigorously to bring some rhyme and reason to our vital rail network. We couldn't exist without railroads, and important policy decisions are in the making aimed at giving us a viable, workable system of rail service.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is less than two years old. We created it as a separate entity in order to put the full weight of the Department behind a massive effort to cut the senseless highway death toll that amounts to over 150 bloody corpses every 24 hours.

Just the day before yesterday we unveiled three of our new Experimental Safety Vehicles -- ESV's -- which are now undergoing crash testing. In addition, we are aiming with solid concentration at the problem of drunk driving. Alcohol is a factor in approximately half of those 55,000 highway deaths every year and our Alcohol Countermeasures Program is designed to get those drunks off the road. A word of warning -- our Alcohol Safety Action Project here in Wichita (which I'll be visiting later this morning) has been in operation only since the first of the year and arrests for drunken driving here are up 100 percent over last year!

Our last two Administrations are marine-oriented. We are extremely proud of our U.S. Coast Guard which oversees the safety and environmental integrity of coastal and ocean transportation (both business and pleasure). And -- on a smaller but no less vital scale -- we also operate the U.S. side of America's fourth seacoast through the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

That's a brief outline of our operating responsibilities. Over the top of all this is the Office of the Secretary, working to tie the whole thing together. While America may have great facilities, and a great transportation network -- we are still some distance away from having a fully coordinated, smoothly-operating transportation system.

When our experts start talking about "systems" they start using words like "multi-modal" and "interface."

But despite the obscure language, we are working to get a handle on transportation. We are recognizing the need for change in direction -- the need for change in policy.

We are an urban society. Even Wichita, which prides itself on sunshine, open spaces and clean air, saw its center city population increase by almost 10 percent between 1960 and 1970. That's something of a switch because in most metropolitan areas over the past 10 years suburbia grew while the center city shrank and deteriorated.

So here you have a city that is alive, that is cared about by its people -- a place where people want to live. I imagine those of you from other cities in other states know that few metropolitan areas can make all those statements.

Yet transportation congestion and frustration exist here as elsewhere. Every city in America today is struggling to redefine its character -- to master its own fate, to plan its own future. And efficient urban transportation is a key element -- if not the key element -- in that task.

Modern highways have opened up job opportunities, cut shipping costs, given us access to recreation and vacation areas, and have tied the Nation's cities together in an efficient network. Not to mention the thousands of lives saved because highways designed to interstate standards are built for safety right from the start.

But we live in times of change. We are well aware now that highways alone -- especially in cities -- simply will not do the job that needs to be done. The cry for change becomes louder every day.

And if we are not architects of that change, we will inevitably be its victims. So this Administration is drawing up a new set of blueprints for surface transportation in America.

Last week in Washington I announced this Administration's new proposal that would alter the existing highway financing mechanism -- the Highway Trust Fund.

I consider that announcement the most important I have made since becoming Secretary of Transportation. It will result, I believe, in an improved quality of life for all urban dwellers -- and particularly the poor, the aged, and the handicapped.

Our new program would establish what we call the "Single Urban Fund." The money would come from the Highway Trust Fund. Local and State officials would be given the option of financing urban highways or urban mass transit from a single fund as they see fit, and in the proportions they consider most efficient. Thus, for the first time, urban areas will themselves have the flexibility necessary to free the congested arteries of this Nation.

While the money will come from Washington, as in the past, the initiative for solving urban transportation problems will be placed where it belongs -- with the leaders of those areas who are most familiar with the problems. Washington just cannot legislate programs that will fully meet the needs of all urban centers -- it's up to you and your local elected officials.

The Single Urban Fund would provide Federal dollars -- capital investment funds -- for any type of surface transportation improvement. Local officials would decide whether they needed highways, rail rapid transit systems, exclusive bus lanes, the so-called "people movers," or any other transport innovation.

We want to increase local involvement, to return Federal decision-making to the local level. We want to provide a host of transportation alternatives for States and communities to consider. And we want to give them the means to build what needs to be built.

To give you a local angle again, here's what the Single Urban Fund would mean to Wichita: Once the program moved into full operation, the Wichita area would receive some \$2 million a year for urban transportation improvements. The State of Kansas would receive close to \$5 million from the Single Urban Fund. All of which would be earmarked for urban areas. All told (Single Urban Funds and Rural Highway Funds) the State would be receiving over \$9-1/2 million more than they now get for rural and urban roads put together. We look at this as a major breakthrough, and I certainly hope it will get full support from concerned Americans throughout the Nation as we work to get it passed and approved by the Congress!

Over the last 15 years the Federal government alone spent nearly \$40 billion on highways in America. And we built the greatest highway system in the history of the world. Now, the challenge is to put similar billions into urban transportation -- so that we will have the greatest total transportation system in the world.

Of the \$5.6 billion anticipated to be in the Highway Trust Fund in Fiscal Year 1974, \$1 billion would go into the Single Urban Fund for surface transportation improvements. That figure would rise to \$1 billion, 850 million in Fiscal 1975, and \$2 billion, 250 million in Fiscal 1976.

A couple of years ago the national need for mass transit was estimated at \$33 billion. That figure reflects the neglect of nearly 30 years. We are just now starting to catch up. Since President Nixon secured passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970, this Administration has spent nearly \$1 billion for mass transit, as contrasted to less than \$1 billion over all of the previous 5 years! But that effort has been primarily one of preservation -- preserving service -- keeping our major transit systems running until effective long-term solutions could be developed.

The Surface Transportation Program and the Single Urban Fund hold the promise of long-term solutions.

And I want to point out that this is not just a big city program, or a mass transit program, or a rapid rail 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 by establishing a new Rural Federal-Aid System and a Rural General Transportation Fund.

The funding levels for 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 help build county roads and bridges -- so vital to mobility in our agricultural communities.

This program recognizes the diverse transportation needs of this Nation. From the Rockies in Colorado, to the flatlands of Kansas, to the high-rise dwellings in New York and Los Angeles, we are prepared to finance the best methods of transportation available.

People today are concerned about the kind of life they live. Transportation helps shape those lives. And it must be responsive to the needs of our people -- the need for environmental protection, the need for safety, and the need to get where you want cheaply, quickly and efficiently.

This Administration is deeply committed to environmental protection. In the last three years more legislation has been passed and more Federal agencies have been formed, to protect the environment than ever before in history. And in transportation we have made the hard decisions necessary to back up our beliefs.

We have determined not to provide Federal financial aid for extension of Kennedy International Airport into Jamaica Bay -- an area considered an ecological treasure.

In my hometown -- Boston -- a \$15 million airport expansion project has been halted.

We deleted 11.7 miles of an interstate expressway in New Hampshire that was slated to run right under the nose of the "Old Man of the Mountain."

Environmental impact caused us to withdraw support from the Riverfront Expressway in New Orleans, which would have endangered the historic French Quarter.

And in Florida, we halted construction of the Miami-Dade County Jetport on the Northern fringes of the Everglades National Park.

These are just a few of the hard decisions. And they have not all been popular ones. But I believe strongly that our national resources must be preserved, because preservation is progress. I believe that transportation must be compatible with the environment. If environmental quality costs a little more, it is also worth more.

And the same is true of safety. Mobility without safety is no mobility at all. Those of you here in Wichita know the deeper meaning of that statement. This aviation-oriented community -- the "Air Capital of the World" -- has suffered one of the most tragic losses in aviation history. You know what it means to lose a good friend, a fellow student, in the instantaneous death of an airplane crash.

And in highway safety, the Alcohol Countermeasures Program I mentioned earlier has come up with some shocking statistics. Our Alcohol Action Project in Kansas City has determined that a car traveling on city streets between 7 p.m. and 3 a.m. will meet a car driven by a drunk driver every four minutes.

That's 15 times an hour -- Russian roulette with your life; a gamble that the drunk driver won't cross the white line and collide head-on with your car. Those odds are appalling. The drunken driver must be stopped.

As we move through the decade of the seventies, we must keep these over-riding goals in mind: safety, environmental protection, and transportation efficiency.

I solicit your support in attaining these goals. None of them will be reached without full support from people who care. And if the young people of today don't care, who will carry on what we start today? You are the future -- and that's an awesome responsibility.

Speaking a year ago to students at the University of Nebraska, President Nixon said: "Young people need something positive to respond to -- some high enterprise in which they can test themselves, fulfill themselves."

I believe we have those great challenges in transportation -- high enterprises that are worthy of your resources, your capacities, your courage, and your intelligence.

I ask you to respond to that challenge -- to help make this a far better world.

Thank you.

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