



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE GREENSBORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1972

To you members of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce who sponsor this very commendable ceremony -- I say "well done". An evening like this contributes more to good citizenship and good understanding than anything I know. This coupled with your "design for action" for 1972, will keep Nat Green's city in the forefront of American growth and progress.

I can appreciate the work that went into this banquet. As a former President of the Greater Boston Chamber, I know how much time and effort an affair such as this requires.

I am privileged to bring you the greetings of President Nixon. I mentioned to him that I would be meeting with you and he asked me to extend his best wishes for a pleasant and productive evening.

The business of the Chamber of Commerce is business so let me start right off by saying business is good. In fact, it is great. President Nixon's double barreled action of stimulating the economy while holding price increases to a minimum is taking effect. The programs he announced last summer and last fall are paying off for all of us. All economic reports are favorable. All indicators are go. The most recent cost of living statistics showed that increases in inflation have been virtually stopped. The price increases for March were far less than even the most optimistic dared to dream. And in April, wholesale food prices actually went down.

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At the same time, the economy was flourishing beyond all expectation. The housing industry is having its best year yet. Auto earnings are at a record high, and, as I noted, all the leading business indicators point to an expanding economy.

At the same time, more people are employed in the United States than ever before and this labor force is bringing home higher wages than at any time in history.

As a very vital part of this economy, transportation is also expanding. Our total transportation bill comes to about \$200 billion a year -- which represents about 20 percent of the gross national product. We, too, are big business, and we are growing.

President Nixon's challenge to me when I first came to Washington three years ago was to prepare for this growth -- in all modes. In aviation, we were registering, at that time, about \$53 million operations a year at airports where we had our FAA towers. Our Department economists looking at their best crystal ball predicted this figure would jump to more than 171 million at the end of the current decade -- a growth of over 220 percent.

It was forecasts like this and others that prompted the President to draft and send to the Congress his historic airport and airways development legislation which was approved by overwhelming bipartisan support. This law provides federal funds for modernizing our local airports and expanding and improving our air traffic and air navigation systems. The monies making up this fund are derived from charges paid by users of the aviation systems.

This law has now developed into a ten-year, \$10 billion program. We are allocating \$280 million dollars annually for airport construction and improvement.

It is this Act that enables me to announce today that we are providing two grants to your Greensboro -- High Point -- Winston Salem Regional Airport. The first, totalling \$42,455 will help finance a long-range master plan of future airport growth and needs. And if you think \$42,000 isn't much -- well, I've saved the best for last.

The second grant is for \$2,172,935 to help buy land for airport expansion. The grant will also enable airport authorities to provide relocation assistance for those people and businesses displaced by the airport's development.

We are, at the same time, making a grant of nearly \$200,000 to Rockingham County to help in constructing a new airport to serve Reidsville.

Earlier today in Charlotte, I announced the awarding of grants of nearly \$2,300,000 dollars to Douglas Municipal Airport. Those funds will be used to purchase land for the eventual construction of a new parallel runway and for other airport improvements. Aviation is becoming an increasingly important means of transportation in North Carolina. We want to help it grow.

The second growth problem that confronted transportation takes two forms. The first of which is the tremendous growth of America's urban areas. Such has been the pace of this urban concentration that at present over 70 percent of our population now lives on about two percent of the land.

Now here is the second prong of this growth problem: the steady growth in the American standard of living means that our Nation's automobile fleet is increasing at the rate of 10,000 cars a day. That's a net increase. Every day of the year, there are 10,000 more vehicle registrations than there were the day before. But compound this again by adding our absolute population growth which translates into 10,000 new licensed operators taking to the highways every day -- again, every day of the year.

These growth problems -- compounded -- have meant a very rapid jamming up, a congestion, of the places where all these people live, that is, the two percent of our land area we call cities. And in the face of this congestion, this "immobility", have we turned logically to the obvious solution -- improved urban public transportation? By and large, no, we have not.

In 1950 there were 1,400 privately-owned urban transit companies operating 87,000 vehicles and carrying 13.8 billion passengers. By 1967 there were 300 fewer companies, 25,000 fewer vehicles, and they carried only 6.6 billion passengers. And over that same period, the balance sheets went from a \$66 million surplus to a \$67 million deficit.

These were the facts that prompted President Nixon to draw up his Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Legislation of 1970 which also passed with heavy bi-partisan support. This is a 10 year program giving long-range financial assurance to cities and towns for improving public transportation.

Now the city of Greensboro is more fortunate than most. You have a very stable transit system with an up-to-date fleet of buses in good operating condition. But not all cities are anywhere as lucky. Two nights ago I spoke to a Chamber of Commerce Transportation Dinner in Burlington, Vermont. That city's transit company has given notice that it will end operations on June 16. And in neighboring cities of High Point and Winston-Salem uneasiness of the urban transit situation has prompted local authorities to start worrying about their transit future. We in the Department of Transportation are happy to assist them. And I would like for a moment to talk with you about the reasons behind our close attention to this urban transit challenge.

For a very important segment of our American population -- life depends on public transit. These are the poor, the handicapped, the elderly and the very young -- all those who cannot or do not drive an automobile.

Too often we overlook the role of transportation in our efforts to retrain workers, upgrade medical care, improve housing and add new incentives to education. How many times have we heard people say, "Look at all these jobs advertised every Sunday, yet people are unemployed! How come?" Our answer is that the unemployed simply have no way of getting to the jobs. Too often, among the poor, the ownership of an auto is a pre-requisite for being able to find and hold a job. This must be corrected.

The mission of transportation is to bring the people together. But, again, does your transportation system do this? I recall a city in my home state of Massachusetts that suddenly discovered some of its divisiveness stemmed from the radial nature of its transit system. All routes -- like the spokes of a wheel -- pointed downtown. But there was no way in the world to go from one neighborhood to another.

I suggest these transportation roles may be important in the two very commendable programs sponsored by you members of the Greensboro Chamber -- your human resources development division plan and your human relations program. Good transportation can bring your goals closer.

This absolute necessity of public transit to many of our citizens lies behind new legislation we have just sent up to the Congress -- new legislation which I consider to be the most important transportation measure we have ever proposed. We are asking that money be made available from the Highway Trust Fund to finance urban transportation projects. The present law dictates that the funds can be used only for design and construction of highways. But in many cities the need is not just for highways alone. We want local authorities who best know their own transportation problems to be able to choose the best system to resolve those problems. The key is flexibility.

A couple of weeks ago, our Deputy Federal Highway Administrator, Ralph Bartelsmeyer, was speaking to a group of state highway officials and he best summarized our intentions. He said, "The main thrust of this imaginative new program which has not only President Nixon's support but also his participation in the planning stages -- will be to focus greater attention on the mushrooming transportation needs of our urban areas and to give local communities of 50,000 population and up a choice of how they spend their transportation dollars."

We are also proposing in this legislation the creation of a Special Rural Fund which will give authorities concerned with rural transportation the same flexibility of choice.

This legislation is urgently needed.

The forecasts of future growth in aviation that I mentioned earlier are common to all modes of transport -- trucking, rail freight, and water borne commerce. Indeed, we anticipate a doubling of transportation capacity by 1990. We are not planning, however, to meet this growth solely by building twice as many highways, airports, cars, trucks, trains, planes or buses. We are looking for improved efficiencies, technological advances and new systems and techniques. We want better results from facilities already in place. To achieve these advances, we are now spending a half a billion dollars a year on research and development. We are, for example, working with a new high speed tracked air cushion vehicle; we are developing techniques for keeping the St. Lawrence Seaway open 12 months of the year; we have developed new "people mover" systems and dial-a-ride bus service; we are experimenting with ways of turning waste material into highway surfacing; ... in aviation, we are introducing automation into our traffic centers -- automation that can select the best air routes for aircraft and keep them separated from others in flight; we are working with the railroads to increase the availability of freight cars -- our research covers all transport modes and we are making progress.

Many of these new vehicles and systems will be on display at TRANSCO 72, a big shining new International Transportation Exposition to be held at Dulles International Airport near Washington from May 27 to June 4. I invite all of you who are interested in any phase of transportation to come and see our wares. You will find it educational and exciting. If it moves, we'll have it on display. As we say in Massachusetts, "Y'All Come!"

And now, if I might, I'd like to take off my Secretary's cap and put on my ordinary citizens cap and say "Thank You" for your wonderful human relations and human resources programs I mentioned before. They are exactly the kind of thing America needs. I am aware that we have in our Country some pretty good size problems. But we also have some pretty great people -- people like you members of the Greensboro Chamber here together. I know people like you working together -- quietly and patiently are going to solve these problems. We in Washington have a tendency to think that we are going to achieve major breakthroughs with big important laws and substantial allocations of funds. These are helpful and necessary, granted, but real progress will come only from a change of attitude on the part of millions and millions of Americans. And this change will come from the hard work of a lot of decent people like you ladies and gentlemen here tonight. You are finding jobs for your unfortunate neighbors. You are working to turn strangers into friends. I wish you all the good luck and success in the world. And if transportation can help you in any way, let me know, for you now have a very real friend in John Volpe. Thank you.

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