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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

59-S-72

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE OHIO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, SHERATON-COLUMBUS HOTEL, COLUMBUS, OHIO, FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1972, 12:30 p.m.

I was delighted when Congressman Harsha asked me to participate in this seminar. Bill has long been a real spark plug for progressive transportation legislation, just as Ohio has long been a leader in transportation technologies and products.

I certainly couldn't come to Ohio without making immediate reference to the great work that is being done in this State as regards the future of transportation.

Thirteen months ago I announced that we had picked a 300 acre tract near Marysville as the site for our Motor Vehicle Compliance Test Facility. We anticipate completion sometime in 1974.

Our selection of the Marysville site was a direct result of your decision to build the world's largest and most complete transportation research facility in the center of your State. I am excited over the prospects the facility will afford for research and testing of virtually all ground transportation vehicles and components.

The facilities you are building are indicative of the new dimensions in transportation progress.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of engineering for safety, or achieving zero emissions, and of complying with a host of new standards for safer, cleaner, quieter vehicles. These purposes will be served, and served well, by your new Transportation Research Center.

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In inviting me to be with you today, your arrangements committee suggested that I take as my topic "Transportation in the Seventies." Well, that could take up most of the afternoon -- and I'd probably only get up to 1975!

Let me, then, skim across the highlights of where we stand in transportation, and what -- generally -- we can look for through the remainder of the decade.

This is a period of transition for transportation, in Ohio and throughout the Nation. Our efforts in Washington for the past three-and-one-half years have been directed primarily toward remedies for the most serious ills -- Fiscal insufficiencies, the malnutrition of public transit, the hardening of transportation arteries in and around our urban areas. Thanks to excellent bi-partisan support in Congress for President Nixon's legislative proposals, new financial foundations have been laid for "catch up" and "go ahead" developments in airports and airways, mass transit, and rail passenger service. Through capital grant assistance programs, we have saved and stabilized public transportation in at least 60 U.S. cities, and by authorizing \$3.1 billion over five years (\$1 billion in 18 months alone), given public transportation a new lease on life throughout America.

The difficult jobs we are doing immediately. The impossible tasks, in the true American tradition, take a little longer. But they are no less compelling. There is no turning aside from goals; no ducking of responsibility.

We have taken a strong stand for passive restraint systems in our cars, and we're not yielding an inch on that requirement. The best bet seems to be the air bag, if nothing better comes along. As a result of Federal insistence, something better may come along. At least the engineers are working the problem.

The same is true of emission control devices. Emissions must be reduced, if we are to live and breathe in our cities as well as drive in them. The day of reckoning simply can't be postponed indefinitely.

Whatever transportation is today, it must be significantly better tomorrow. President Nixon has called for nothing less than a total renewal of transportation in the United States. The President's instructions are simple and direct -- to make transportation "a better servant of the people."

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 synonymous with the private automobile. In some urban settings, travelers may be able to move more efficiently and with greater ease by means of

PRT -- Personal Rapid Transit -- than by car. And at lower cost, as well! PRT, 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.

And such innovations are definitely part of the immediate future. They have to be.

For years we have served our growing transportation needs by building more highways, larger airports, and faster cars. Yet when I talk about alternatives, I always run into people who wonder if this is the same John Volpe who launched the Interstate Highway Program under President Eisenhower, the John Volpe of the Volpe Construction Company.

I assure these skeptics that John Volpe hasn't changed, but the times and circumstances have. America's network of highways, led by the Interstate System, represent a magnificent accomplishment -- in President Nixon's words, "The success story of the past two decades." But highways alone will never do the job. We must provide attractive, efficient alternatives.

Under President Nixon's policy of balanced transportation we have a whole new outlook. Preservation of the environment and beautification are now implicit in highway planning and construction. Last year we processed 435 Environmental Impact Statements from State Highway Departments. One hundred and ninety eight were processed and approved the first three months of 1972 -- all before a shovelful of earth is turned on a new highway project. We have put teeth in the billboard control law, and to date all the States but one (not Ohio!) have agreed to limit billboards along highways built with Federal assistance. Some 100,000 billboards will be coming down this year, and a half million more before our Bicentennial Year. We are returning American scenery to the American public.

Yet there is so much more to do.

We must be willing to take bold actions, to do things differently, and to put a limit on patience if we are to correct the shortcomings of America's mobility.

We must increase capacity and reduce congestion.

We must move people and products with greater efficiency, but at less cost to life and limb, to the environment, and to the pocketbook. We must transform today's transportation network into a true transportation system, with modes that work together as well as they work separately.

We are moving toward all of these objectives. There is no element or aspect of transportation that in the past three years has not shown the imprint or felt the impact of the Nixon Administration's programs to improve mobility in America.

The Airport-Airways Development Act of 1970 has assured the money, manpower, and machinery necessary to expand the Civil Air System consistent with safety and with the public need for air travel. The air traffic control system is rapidly being fully automated. Airline flight delays have been reduced 50 percent in the past two years, and are a third of what they were in 1969. Our Airport Development Aid Program (ADAP) is on schedule. In the past three years we have approved \$29 million for airport improvements in Ohio alone.

In highway construction, we are maintaining the high standards of performance that have made the Interstate System one of the wonders of the modern world and, incidentally, the envy of much of the world. The Interstate System is now 79 percent complete -- 33,375 miles are now open to the public -- with another 3,700 miles under construction. While we hear a great deal about public opposition to highways, the truth is that route location approval is now pending on less than 500 miles of interstate for which public hearings already have been held; and only 949 miles -- or two percent of the proposed 42,500 mile Interstate System -- have not yet advanced to the point of public hearings. Since 1969 Ohio has received \$2 billion from the Highway Trust Fund for highway construction and \$15 million for highway safety planning. Ohio has some of the finest, and safest highways in the Nation. More than \$105 million in Federal funds have been provided for highways in Franklin County in the past three years.

This is all well and good. But overall, highways alone are not enough.

The final ingredient in the prescription for better balance in our transportation capability and capacity is revitalized public transit for the Nation's cities. President Nixon's Public Transportation Assistance Act of 1970 was landmark legislation, providing a Federal shot in the arm for failing or faltering public transit systems. Communities in Ohio have received \$30 million in grants, with \$49 million worth of applications pending. While much of this was "first aid" -- simply preventing a bus company from folding, for instance -- we are following up our initial band-aid approach with some strong medicine: heavy doses of research, development and demonstration money for People Movers, Tracked Air Cushion Vehicles, and such innovations as Dial-A-Ride, exclusive bus lanes and the PRT's I talked about earlier.

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 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 "second choice" for trips into town.

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

That situation must be duplicated in cities across the country. But communities must want public transit, and they must act to preserve what exists while promoting something better. I noted with disappointment the failure of Franklin County residents to approve a one mill tax levy for transit purposes. The Columbus Transit Company is better than most -- with reasonably good equipment and adequate routes. It is a resource well worth preserving for the good of the community. I would caution the electorate to consider the transit issue more carefully at the next balloting.

Now let's move on to another topic.

Our concern for across-the-board improvements in all modes of transportation during the 70's comes to a common focus in the matter of safety.

I am pleased to see that Ohio was one of the states to show a drop in traffic deaths last year. The fatality rate in Ohio -- 4.0 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles -- was also well below the national average of 4.7.

But I am sure you are not satisfied, and neither am I. For the first four months of this year traffic deaths in Ohio were running at approximately the same rate as last year. Nationally, first quarter figures show an alarming 6.8 percent increase.

Our national highway safety record is a tragedy without excuse. Last year 55,000 of our citizens gambled their lives on our roadways -- and lost. Three million are injured annually. More than 90 percent of all the Nation's transportation fatalities occur on our streets and highways. In addition to the lives lost -- many of them are young people -- the economic loss has been estimated to be as high as \$46 billion annually.

Our official goal is to cut the highway death toll by one third before 1980. I personally believe we can do better, and must do better than that. If we don't reduce fatalities by at least 50 percent, then we just aren't

caring enough or trying hard enough. To achieve a safety record we can live with, we must have a safety policy everyone can live by.

Our policy with respect to the car is to make it as safe and as forgiving as possible. That's the goal of our Experimental Safety Vehicle (ESV) Program. We want tomorrow's vehicles to come with a lifetime guarantee -- not the lifetime of the car, but the lifetime of those who ride in it.

We must design and construct every highway so that danger is not one of its dimensions -- death not one of its destinations. The Interstates are two to three times safer than conventional roadways. We are requesting increasingly larger sums from the Highway Trust Fund to assure that trend continues.

Then, we also have an aggressive policy to get the drunk, the unlicensed, and otherwise unqualified driver off the highways.

We are making early but encouraging progress in that direction. Thirty-five Alcohol Safety Action Projects are now in effect across the country. As a result of the project effort in Cincinnati -- for example -- drunk driving arrests have gone up 200 percent since the program began.

We are also working with the States to induce more effective and far-reaching driver control programs. One provision we would like to see adopted universally is periodic re-examination of all drivers. We also favor better driver education programs, the use of simulators in driver training, and stiffer penalties for driving carelessly, recklessly or irresponsibly.

We must double and re-double our efforts to reduce the danger of driving. Your Transportation Research Center and our Vehicle Compliance Test Facility will be valuable tools in making the cars we drive tomorrow deliberately safer and significantly cleaner.

According to recent reports, American-built cars are regaining some of the market lost in recent years to the imports. This is good news for our automotive and auto-related industries. But it also re-confirms the ability of American enterprise to rise to any occasion -- to subdue any challenge.

We can build superior transportation products. We can compete. And if we can make those products stylish, we can also make them safe. We can make them clean, quiet, comfortable and efficient.

In fact, all together, we can do it all -- and I am confident we will.

Thank you.

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