



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS BY U.S. UNDER SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JAMES M. BEGGS BEFORE THE CONFERENCE ON STATE TRANSPORTATION, ISSUES OF THE SEVENTIES, FRIENDSHIP INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1972

Mr. Moderator, distinguished panelists and participants, it is a pleasure to join you today in furthering the cause of intergovernmental relations.

It is the philosophy of the Nixon Administration that the functions of government should be performed and the decisions of government made as close to the people as possible.

In the area of transportation, the Federal Government cannot and should not dictate solutions to local transportation problems.

It is the role of my Department to encourage and guide state and local transportation agencies to attain high standards of efficiency and competence. And in many cases, to provide the resources to do the job.

A major impediment to the transportation decision-making process at the state and local levels is the unevenness of the flow of Federal funding channeled as it is through our categorical grant programs.

Far too frequently Federal financial support is unavailable to meet the most pressing local transportation need, while at the same time more than sufficient funds are at hand for less important projects.

It has been in the effort to place management of resources at the decision-making level that I have frequently endorsed the concept of a single transportation trust fund.

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A modest step in that direction is the Federal-Aid Highway and Mass Transportation Act of 1972. We are encouraged by the recent success accorded that proposal.

This Bill passed the Senate with a provision which, if enacted, will greatly increase the flexibility of state and local governments in determining how Federal transportation funds will be used in their urban areas.

The Senate version of the Bill would allocate up to \$800 million annually from the Highway Trust Fund for urban transportation purposes. That is, it would be up to state and local officials to determine what proportion of the \$800 million would be spent for highways in urban areas and what share, if any, would be allocated to public transit capital expenditures -- either bus or rail.

Although scaled down from our original request of \$1 billion for urban transportation, the Bill as passed by the Senate would provide that flexibility in solving urban transportation problems we believe essential. It would bring funding and responsibility closer together.

Our success in the Senate came after initial defeat of the urban fund concept in committee. As you probably know, under the bipartisan leadership of Senators Cooper and Muskie, the urban fund was restored by amendment on the floor. It passed by a vote of 48 to 26.

If we are to win this one, we will have to have a repeat performance of the minor miracle of overturning a powerful committee recommendation. The House Subcommittee on Roads and the full House Public Works Committee have by convincing margins voted against the use of Highway Trust Fund money to support transit systems other than bus-related highway facilities.

Whatever the outcome, it is apparent there is a much greater awareness of the interrelationship of highway and transit needs.

The momentum for meeting transportation challenges on a systems basis grows. It is a momentum not well served by the narrowness of our categorical grant programs. The efforts in Congress to increase flexibility in transportation planning surely will continue. To succeed, those efforts will require increased coordination between the elements of the transportation field -- particularly in the intergovernmental area.

Apart from legislative success and defeat, we have moved in this Administration to work more closely with you and your counterparts in all of the states.

I submit that we in the Nixon Administration have shown a willingness to go the extra mile in cooperating with you to solve your transportation problems and to help you meet your challenges.

The effectiveness of our good intentions almost exclusively depends on how well you capitalize on them. I believe better use of our willingness to help will be a major accomplishment of this conference.

I look forward to discussing our legislative programs in more detail as this panel progresses.

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